

Canzone and Sonnets

Francesco Petrarca



Painted by Grevedon.

Eng.d by C.A. Jewett & W. Anderson Cincinnati O.

Petrarch.

LOUISVILLE:

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CANZONE AND SONNETS:

OF

FRANCESCO PETRARCA.

WITH

NOTES AND A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.

BY

SUSAN WALLASTON.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE ONLY ENGLISH EDITION.

EDITED BY

BEN CASSEDAY, A. M.

LOUISVILLE:

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1849.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

It is a matter of no little wonder that the literati of England and America, should have waited until 1841, for the first complete translation of this work. That Petrach was the first lyric poet not only of his own, but perhaps of any age, has ceased to be doubted. The present translator, Mrs. Wallaston, has evidently made her task a labor of love, and has well succeeded in the difficult undertaking of rendering into good English verse, the graceful "*amorosi detti*" of "*Il piu gentile amatore*," of the fourteenth century.

The American editor can boast of having added little, if anything, to the value of the work. In the English edition, the translation was accompanied with the sonnets in the original of Petrarch. But on account of the paucity of Italian scholars in this country, the present editor has been induced to believe that more ready sale might be had for the volume, without than with their introduction. This change, together with some abridgement of the notes to the original edition, and an

occasional attempt to elucidate a difficult passage which had been passed over by the former translator, and a careful revisal of the whole volume, constitute all that gives him claim to the title of editor.

In reference to the life of Petrarch, which precedes the volume, Mrs. Wallaston acknowledges her indebtedness to the writings of Villani Aretino, and the Abbé de Sade, as also to Guido Loreli, the translator of Milton. She might with some justice be accused of having painted the character of Petrarch in too glowing colors, but the loving spirit in which she has rendered his glorious verse, will readily excuse this fault. Had she loved Petrach less, there had been less true poetry, and less earnest appreciation in her translation of his sonnets.

From all true lovers of literature, this book merits and will receive attention, and to those who have not heretofore known Petrarch it is invaluable; for it introduces them to one who united in his person the almost irreconcilable qualities of poet, philosopher, and politician; to one who was the accomplished gentleman, the ardent patriot, the true philosopher, and the noble lover. As such let them receive and appreciate him.

THE EDITOR.

LOUISVILLE, MAY, 1849.

PREFACE.

It is not without a feeling of anxiety and diffidence, that I submit my poetical translation of "One Hundred Sonnets of Francesco Petrarca" to the world of critics, when I reflect how vast is the ordeal to which I have voluntarily exposed myself, in having undertaken a task none have thought fit to accomplish before me, while my sovereigns in intellect have not hesitated to acknowledge its difficulty.

But while I arrogate to myself, the merit of standing the first who has ever made a complete selection of the best of the Italian works, of the first lyric poet perhaps of any age, it is but justice to state the extreme labor it has cost me to comprehend the often obscured meaning of my author, desirous as I was to return at least a faithful reflection of his created beauties, if (un-Prometheus-like) I failed to infuse into my subject the spirit of poesy, which I extracted from my great original.

It may be asked how can the "amorosi detti" of the lover, who sighed nearly five centuries ago, be supposed to awaken the sympathies of an age which has the addition of that period to its experience, and which doubtless has not failed to progress in an equal ratio, both in refinement and elevation of sentiment? My only reply is a reference to the works of "Il piu gentile amatore" of the fourteenth century, where, if I mistake not, the loftiest lover of the present day will find his inspirations already anticipated, while he is compelled to acknowledge in the music of "La Sorga" the master key from which every succeeding modulation must proceed.

And here, perhaps, it will not be considered out of place should I say a word upon the meter in which I have clothed my Sonnets, in adopting which, however, I trust I shall be equally acquitted of arrogance or an assumption of originality. As it will be readily conceded—had I selected the more harmonious and consecutive rhymes, I should have probably conciliated the suffrages of the more general reader, and have doubtless accomplished my task with comparative ease to myself; but I have chosen rather to follow the opinion of classic scholars, who pronounce that the legitimate sonnet ought to be preserved in English, as in the Italian original. In obedience to this opinion, therefore, I have sacrificed sound to correctness, which indeed has proved advantageous, inasmuch as it has enabled me to follow my illustrious model, step by step, in the form of

his Sonnets, though, in feature, mine may be found but a very humble transcript.

Though, like Frankenstein, I may one day rue the breath I have myself wooed into existence, I will not now shrink from the penalty, but willingly submit my work to the judgment of my countrymen.

THE AUTHORESS.

HAMPSTEAD, FEBRUARY, 1841.

LIFE

OF

FRANCESCO PETRARCA.

FRANCESCO PETRARCA was born at Arezzo in Tuscany, on the 20th of July 1304. His father, Petrarco dell' Ancisa, was a citizen of Florence, and descended of an ancient family; but having attached himself to the Bianchi party, upon the triumph of the Neri faction, he, with Dante and many hundred others, was exiled from the city, stripped of his possessions, and compelled to seek temporary refuge in Arezzo. His wife, Eletta Canigiani, who was the companion of his flight, and by birth also a Florentine, secures to Florence the proud boast of standing the legitimate parent of this her immortal son. At the expiration of seven months, Petrarco removed with his wife and child to Pisa: when, after a short interval, the still prevailing party in Florence having revoked his wife's sentence of banishment, considering her less an object of suspicion

than her husband, she was permitted to retire with her child to Ancisa, a village fourteen miles from Florence, and where they still possessed a farm. Here they remained until Francesco had completed his seventh year, when his father recalled his mother and himself, and they once more fixed their abode together at Pisa. Two more years had elapsed, and Petrarco, now hopeless of being again permitted to return to Florence, adopted his long-meditated project of removing to Avignon on the Rhone, where the Court of Rome then resided.

But the young Francesco was not long permitted to enjoy this changed scene; his father sent him to Carpentras, where, under that excellent master, Convennole, he commenced his studies in grammar, rhetoric and logic. Perceiving his rapid progress, at the age of fifteen his father determined that he should apply himself to the study of law: with this view, he sent him for three years to Montpellier, from thence to Bologna, then an university of much celebrity, and which (amongst other excellent professors) at that time boasted the names of Cecco d'Ascoli, and Cina da Pistoja.

But though his strong filial affection forbade contradiction to his father's wishes, his nature seems always to have rebelled against a study so repugnant to his principles, for upon the death of his parents, who expired within a few days of each other in the year 1326, he relinquished all idea of so distasteful a profession,

and abandoned himself wholly to the pursuit of literature, a taste which he had contracted during his four years' residence at Bologna. The purity of his style and the ease of his diction soon gained him a high reputation among the learned: and with this triumphant dawn of a literary career, he beheld the circle of his friends gradually extending.

Among those by whom he was particularly distinguished, was the Bishop Giacomo Colonna, brother to the Cardinal, who had been his fellow-student, at Bologna, under the same master, Messer Giovanni Andrea. The bishop was a man remarkable for the exceeding frankness of his character; his conversation and correspondence were alike distinguished by that same ingenuousness of sentiment, whilst his eloquence had become the universal theme of admiration: matured in judgment, even from a very early age, noble in mind and bearing, possessing both the taste and power to acquire knowledge of every description, his Christian humility exalted the lustre of his high qualities, and threw a charm over his pure existence.

That he might experience no interruption to his studies, Petrarca had retired to a small vale, eight miles from Avignon, named Val Chiusa, from its sequestered situation; and where, during his lifetime, his father had purchased a considerable quantity of land. But his principal object in this seclusion, was to withdraw wholly from the influence of Avignon, a city which had now become as notorious for the depravity of its moral

atmosphere, as it had been formerly condemned for its physical disadvantages. It may be imagined how revolting such an association would prove to a young and enthusiastic mind, thirsting for fame, and eager for the acquisition of knowledge; and may we not infer this moral from his flight to the quiet shades of Val Chiusa, that the heart which virtue has made its home, will, amid the corruption it witnesses, only cling the more tenaciously to its own purity?

Petrarca had now attained his twenty-third year; and to this period his affections had been unroused by that "rich golden shaft," whose winged magic was yet wanting to give the impetus to his slumbering imagination, and to dress in reality the beautiful creations of his fanciful mind. It was on the morning of Good Friday, in the year 1327, that he entered the church of Santa Chiara in Avignon, to mingle in the Catholic duties of that day, when he there beheld for the first time his beautiful Laura. Although in his innumerable verses Petrarca has taken infinite pains to specify the graces of his idol, it is perhaps not in a poet's mirror that we should seek for the most faithful reflection of an original.

"I beheld a lady," thus speaks the poet, "habited in a green mantle interspersed with violets, upon which hung a profusion of golden tresses, whilst her lofty, yet graceful carriage, distinguished her from all who surrounded her. A countenance of celestial beauty was set off by a throat of exquisite whiteness; her beaming

eyes were surmounted by brows of ebony; her mouth, on which the rose seemed to have reflected its glowing hue, enclosed pearls of dazzling transparency, whilst to complete this modelled loveliness, were the most delicate hand, a small taper foot, a gay, artless expression, and a clear musical voice, whose tones won an instant entrance to the heart." After this glowing portraiture, skepticism itself dare no longer question Laura's beauty, whilst from the best authenticated likenesses we may infer a pleasing if not so poetical a corroboration of the description. Indeed, the excessive modesty and simplicity of her character seemed the charm which, in the eyes of her lover, threw a lustre over the natural graces of her mind and person, and contributed perhaps, in no small degree, to perpetuate his strong and deeply rooted affection. Much discussion has taken place relative to Laura's origin, and subsequent position in the world; but the enquiry seems always to have terminated with this limited information, that her maiden name was Noves, and that she lived and died in the strictest retirement, with her father, in the neighborhood of Val Chiusa. There have been those who, altogether skeptical of her existence, have pronounced her a being of the poet's own imagining, presented by himself to the world, arrayed in the semblance of reality, to invest with something like identity the creations of his prodigal muse.

Again, there have been others who, in their strictures upon the poet, have not hesitated to pronounce his

tuneful breathings a political language, intelligible only to those who held the key of the then ruling policy. His poetry will prove its own commentary upon this opinion, and cannot fail to convict of cold pedantry the critic who could thus strangely misinterpret the most graceful painter of the heart's best affections! The influence of a passion destined to be the ceaseless source of grief, and subsequently of salutary remorse for his unconquerable weakness, served only to attune the poet's lyre to the purest, the most faithful strain, its chords have ever awakened.

A remarkable feature in the character of Laura, was the stability of her judgment: hence it was, that whilst living in a most corrupt age, in a country the most dissolute, surrounded by every species of vice—practiced, too, by those who professed themselves disciples of St. Peter—she proudly bore herself in unsullied purity within the sphere of her filial and domestic duties; and by her calm severity, not only repelled her lover, but undertook the noble task of directing his love from herself to that of glory, fame, and virtue.

Abandoned to the hopelessness of his passion, Petrarca remained for some time wholly incapable of directing his thoughts to other contemplations, save that of the being of his idolatry; but at length, shocked to discover the prostration of his every energy, he roused himself from his lethargic weakness, and soon ambition completed the conquest of his mind, if not of his heart. Filled with remorse for the time he had

dreamed away in all the inanity of wretchedness, a remorse he expresses so pathetically in that beautiful sonnet beginning "Padre del Ciel dopo i perduti giorni," he resolved to quit Avignon for a season, hoping that a contact with new countries and unvisited scenes might win for him some alleviation of his heart's consuming misery. Having obtained for this purpose the consent of Cardinal Colonna and the bishop, his brother, with whom he resided, he quitted Avignon in the spring of the year 1331. He proceeded to Paris, passed into Flanders, visited the Rhine, Ghent, Liege, Cologne, and lastly, journeyed to Rome, where he was received by Stephen, the elder Colonna, with paternal affection: and was honored throughout the capital for the fame which his writings had deservedly acquired for him. Having spent some months in Rome, he became desirous of recommencing his studies. Returning therefore once more to Avignon, he procured the consent of Cardinal Colonna to retire again to the solitude of Val Chiusa, that he might be removed from the interruptions of the court, and less exposed to the immediate influence of Laura's presence.

For the next ten years, Val Chiusa became his constant residence, during which period he composed the works which, from association, have for ever immortalized that sequestered spot. Here he wrote the greater part of his poems: and amongst the rest that in Latin, of "Africa," in honor of the elder Scipio. This is now but little read, for though not deficient in poetic beauty,

it is tedious and uninteresting. It deservedly procured him the reputation, however, of ranking the first poet of the age, and he was soon to have a signal proof of the fame it had acquired him. He was meditating one morning in the meadow adjacent to Val Chiusa, when he was saluted by a messenger from the Roman senate, who delivered him a dispatch, containing a request for his immediate presence in their city, to claim the laurel crown adjudged to his talents. That evening he received an invitation to the same effect from the university at Paris. It will be imagined how gratifying these successive testimonials of the world's favorable opinion were to Petrarca,—manifested, too, in an age when the distinction proposed to him was held in the highest reverence. He hesitated for some time, uncertain from which city to accept the proffered honor; but at length, on the representations of his friend and patron, Cardinal Colonna, he determined that from the hands of his own countrymen he would receive the price of his fame. He quitted Avignon; but anxious to procure the judgment of Robert, King of Naples, upon his poem, he resolved upon making that city the first object in his route. Having received the applause of that monarch, who was esteemed the most talented prince of his age, and the most enthusiastic patron of literature, and declining the wreath of fame Robert himself would have conferred upon him in his own sovereignty, Petrarca repaired to Rome; and on the Easter Sunday of the year 1341, he was crowned by

his friend Orso dell' Anguillara, Senator of Rome, in the presence of the whole capital, who filled the air with rejoicings.*

But alas! how uncertain are the springs of human enjoyment! how often the possession of that for which we have so panted becomes the source of future disquiet! The young leaves of his triumph were yet fresh on his brow, when, instead of the voice of unmingled applause he had fondly hoped would have confirmed their eternal verdure, he beheld envy's withering crest erected against him. Italy resounded with his fame, but the individual tongue and pen were galled to poison his felicity, and even some of his friends now confronted him as enemies.

It seemed, too, as though Heaven had selected the proud day of his prosperity to manifest how equal was the balance "of good and ill," by which He kept in equilibrium the triumph and despair of the human mind. The glorious era in his existence was also the record of his heart's severest affliction. He had quitted Rome to return to Avignon, but being detained at Parma,† by his

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*Petrarca wore the mantle presented to him by King Robert, of Naples. It was of violet-colored velvet, bound with a girdle of diamonds. He was drawn to the capital in a splendid car, and there received three crowns; they were laurel, ivy, and myrtle; he was made a Roman citizen, and permitted to wear the poet's dress, then an exclusive privilege. "Dante was buried in the poet's dress."—Villani.

†A characteristic instance of Italian enthusiasm occurred to Petrarca whilst at Parma. A professor of grammar, at Pontre-

friend Azzo da Correggio, who governed that city for his nephew Mastino della Scala, he there received the intelligence of the deaths of Tommaso da Messina, his dearest friend, and of his beloved patron the Bishop Colonna. A long and dangerous illness was the result of these successive shocks; and here we must not omit to relate a circumstance he himself details as having occurred to him while resident at Parma. He dreamed one night that he beheld the bishop crossing a small rivulet that flowed through his garden. Petrarca arrested him, at the same time questioning him as to his destination. The bishop gently repulsed him, exclaiming: "Detain me not; I am bound for Rome, and do not desire you to accompany me." Petrarca then gazed more steadfastly at his companion, and felt that it was a corpse. From the particulars he gathered some time after the event, Petrarcá expresses his conviction that

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moli, of great age and quite blind, undertook a journey to Naples, where he understood Petrarca then was, determined to breathe the atmosphere of this wonder of the age before he died. He arrived there just as Petrarca had departed for the capital, but Robert, of Naples, received him with kindness and gave him the means of prosecuting his romantic pursuit. He proceeded to Rome, and reached it just in time to learn that Petrarca had quitted the city of his triumph. Undismayed by his disappointment and fatigue, he continued his search, and at length arrived at Parma. He was a man of deformed appearance and singularly ugly; introduced into Petrarca's presence, his son raised him on his shoulders, desiring permission to kiss the head which had created so much that was beautiful, and kneeling down, he again saluted the hand which had been the instrument of conveying those creations to the world.

the hour of his vision was the same in which the bishop had expired.

It was, at this period, that the death of Benedict XII rëawakened the efforts of the Romans to induce his successor, Clement VI, to remove the pontifical court once more from Avignon to its former residence. A solemn embassy to his holiness was agreed upon, and Petrarca was the orator selected to represent the calamitous effects of his predecessors' absence from their city. As might have been expected from the character of the pontiff, (who was indeed little likely to prefer the picture of holy warfare and sacred association, with which Petrarca invested his Roman territories, to the tranquil luxuries of Avignon) the mission was unsuccessful; but the poet's eloquence was rewarded by the friendship of the pope, and the Priory of St. Nicholas of Migliarino, in the diocese of Pisa, was at the same time conferred upon him. This was not the only instance in which a presentation to church benefices seems to have rewarded Petrarca's early study of divinity. He was successively appointed Canon of Lombes, Archdeacon of Parma, and Canon of the Cathedral of Parma, but he always remained a secular clergyman, never choosing to assume priest's orders. He refused a bishopric, and other dignities offered him by Clement VI and his successors, unwilling that the disposition of his time should be regulated or restrained by the imperious duties which their acceptance would necessarily impose upon him.

On the death of his friend and patron, Robert of Naples, Petrarca was despatched to that court, on behalf of the pope, who claimed the sovereignty of the kingdom as lord suzerain during the minority of the young Queen Joanna. The pope had been farther instigated to appoint Petrarca to this mission by Cardinal Colonna, who relied upon the poet's eloquence and influence there to obtain the release of some friends who had been imprisoned, and their estates confiscated, during the late reign; their incarceration was yet further prolonged by the machinations of the prevailing nobles, to whom they had been transferred. Frére Robert treated the pope's pretensions with contempt; but more fortunate in his second mission, Petrarca procured the enlargement of the Cardinal's friends, and then bade adieu to Naples, though not before Queen Joanna had appointed him her chaplain,—a post he had formerly held under her grandfather.

It was shortly after his return to this loved retreat that the fame of an event reached the pontifical court, filling it with consternation, whilst Francesco fondly imagined he recognised in it the type of Rome's rëawakened glory, and Italy's tranquillity. Rome, distracted by the causes already stated, and scarcely less depressed by the contending rule of the Colonna and Orsini families, had been easily induced to gather round the standard of one Nicolas Gabrini di Rienzi,* who, whilst he dila-

* Known to us as Cola Rienzi.

ted upon the obscured splendors of ancient Rome, assured his eager listeners it required but their co-operation to enable him to bring back once more what he designated the "bon état." Boldly heading the republic, he ascended the Capitol, assumed the title of Tribune, and commenced the exercise of his authority with so much justice and moderation, that every other Italian republic unanimously acknowledged his power, by sending ambassadors with the utmost magnificence to treat with him.

Petrarca had long contracted a friendship with Rienzi; each had the same taste for the revival of ancient literature—each alike venerated Rome, and dreamed that she ought still to stand, as she had done, the "Mistress of the World;" it was, therefore, with no feeling of indifference that he hailed the moment in which he fancied he beheld the realization of his dream, whilst his active and eloquent pen was now wholly employed in congratulating the Tribune upon his triumph, and exhorting him not to forget, in his success, the principles of his elevation. Inebriated, however, by his growing power, intoxicated with vanity, Rienzi did alike forget both the principles of his elevation and himself; until, at length, convicted of injustice and cruelty, he was torn to pieces by that very populace—"that many-headed monster thing"—which, but a few months before, had hailed him as a deliverer; and the disappointed Petrarca was compelled to acknowledge in him but another of those enthusiasts, thrown up by the ocean of

faction, who have neither sufficient stability to work out their own theory of liberty, nor disinterestedness enough to separate their desire of self-aggrandizement from the general good.

While these events agitated Rome, Petrarca, urged by his own patriotic feelings and the solicitations of his friends, resolved once more upon crossing the Alps. He was greeted at Verona, Mantua, Ferrara, Capua, and Padua, with an enthusiasm gratifying alike to the patriot and the man, whilst the nobles of each city emulated each other in evincing their high estimate of his worth.

But this repose in Lombardy,—surrounded by his honoring countrymen, in the bosom of his native land,—was but the breathless calm to usher in the alarming terrors of a deadly tempest. By that fearful plague which, at this period, swept in noiseless horror through suffering Italy, he was deprived of another relative. Again, his friend, Franceschino degli Albezzi, a young Florentine of great promise, who had quitted his native city purposely to visit him, was assassinated in traversing the Apennines, by one of the Ubaldini: and, as though fortune, by her successive inflictions, seemed resolved to prove his powers of endurance, death successively deprived him of his friend Giovanni Bardi, his patron Cardinal Colonna, and (the confidant of his attachment) the amiable Sennuccio del Bene.

When the mind is enervated by sorrow, fancy seems to exhaust itself in creating new images of suffering,

and which sometimes prove but too faithful harbingers of the dreaded evil. The cord of life which had bound Petrarca in union with so many friends, had so unexpectedly snapped, that he looked fearfully round upon those still in existence, and fancied he heard the fatal shears contracting still more his narrowing circle, whilst one torturing vision clung night and day to his mind—it was a presentiment of his Laura's dèath. It was not long before his fatal foreboding was verified; intelligence reached him at Verona that she, too, had sunk a victim to the plague. We will not pause to describe the poet's feelings on this severest of bereavements. Who that has enshrined his every hope and happiness in the existence of one loved object will not feel how complete must have been the wreck of both to Petrarca in this his loss. Death had robbed him of his sweetest and tenderest tie, his only golden link to life,—now his heart was widowed, his hope elsewhere. But did religion permit his noble mind to remain a darkening void, busy only with distorted images of despondency and gloom? No! once more he roused himself, and found consolation in projecting schemes for his suffering country. But whilst he thus labored unremittingly for the welfare of others, it was too evident that happiness had for ever fled its home in his heart. Public and private misfortune,—the plague, whose ceaseless terrors kept alive the memory of how fearful a scourge it had proved to himself,—the mortal and revolting strife which surrounded him,—each had its separate influence upon his

character. He became querulous, ascetic in his feelings, weary of existence, seeking rest from whence he knew it could not be attained, anxious for change, and in that change deriving no relief, returning still restless and dispirited. It seems, at this period, that a suspicion of how the world might pronounce upon his prostration of character awoke his anxiety, for he thus writes to his friend Socrate: "I know that if man cannot succeed in banishing his grief, it is imperative that he should moderate and conceal its bitterness. I am conscious of my weakness; but alas! what bereavements have I not been called upon to sustain? Who would not mourn when he beheld the world a lifeless void, yet marked not the track of the brand or the sword to account for the horrid desolation? Who would not grieve to see houses untenanted, cities abandoned, the country a desert, the fields a noiseless sepulchre, the very universe one vast solitude?"

But whilst fallen Italy could not boast of one other spirit generous enough to pay back her universal debasement with redoubled zeal, strength, and virtue, Petrarca alone stood forward, resolved that if he could not shield it from the inflictions of an avenging Providence, he would do his utmost to rescue it from the yet more devastating hand of Man. Aware that the salvation of Italy depended either upon the church or state, and esteeming an army of warriors more effective than a spiritual force, he addressed an anonymous epistle to Charles IV of Luxembourg, now elected Emperor, in-

voking him to its defense. Couched in terms at once vigorous and manly, the writer assured the prince "he should offer no apology for his interference, as he considered the sovereign could receive no higher compliment then to be selected the protector and champion alike of his country's liberties. It was not difficult to discover the author of this epistle; and, though perhaps somewhat tardily, the emperor replied to Francesco by desiring to see him. Petrarca accordingly repaired to Mantua, where he then was, and was received with the confidence he might have expected from this accomplished prince, who had long venerated Petrarca's character, and had more than once sought the poet to bestow on him his friendship.

Conversing with him one day upon a work Petrarca had just completed, entitled *Trattato degli Uomini illustri*, Charles expressed a wish that it should be dedicated to himself. "I shall obey thy command," replied Petrarca, fearlessly, "when thy name shall be enrolled amongst the illustrious men thou so applaudest, not from the possession of an useless scepter alone, but from the glory of thy deeds, the greatness of thy soul,—when thou shalt have made thyself worthy of standing forth to posterity such as the heroes of old appear to us in this day." Charles listened with a calm and cheerful brow; he could not withhold his admiration from the man who thus dared to express himself in an age of venality and prostration. Unlike the demagogue, whose boasted liberty is the misrule of faction, whose freedom

is abject thraldom under another name, the liberty he sought was the emancipation of his expiring land from the contention of petty tyranny, that each interest might feel itself alike secured under one vast paternal rule. But while accessible to the advice of the patriot, Charles was deficient in that vigor and firmness necessary to the accomplishment of vast enterprises; or, perhaps, the voice of interest was more unerringly powerful than the sympathy the poet never failed occasionally to awaken for his country's welfare. He was, at this moment, engaged in secret machinations with the pope and Visconti, to gain the two imperial crowns of Rome and Lombardy, which having obtained upon terms at once disgraceful and injurious to the country, he quitted Italy, and sought again his native Bohemia.

Irritated at the disappointment of his hopes, Petrarca once more addressed the emperor, reproaching him for his conduct. After reminding him of the years of toil and bloodshed it had cost his ancestors, to obtain the throne and scepter he now possessed without unsheathing his sword; after again reproaching him for having so unworthily abandoned his rule, and which bore the character of an impotent and shameful flight, he goes on to say: "No prince ever awakened such flattering hopes as thyself—not one could have more relentlessly destroyed them. Rather than it should have been said that Rome's sovereign had abandoned his subjects, I would have had him imitate the monarch of Macedon, who, not content with the limits of his kingdom's rule,

proclaimed himself sovereign also of the universe." This appeal drew down upon him the applause of his countrymen. Had Charles possessed sufficient magnanimity to profit by the orator's remonstrance—had he again quitted his own harsh climate, and crushed by his presence the contending tyrants of Italy, he might have then consolidated her government and her power. Rome would have risen from her ashes; and Italy herself would have still held her seat in the council of princes. Her history would not then have had to record more than four centuries of inertness and obscurity; but re-invigorated by recovered independence—no longer a prey to foreign cupidity, she would have once more raised her august head, and felt *that* arm still powerful which had once swayed the fate of empires. The lofty character of the primitive Italian, now crushed in its descendants by successive misfortune, would have recovered its wonted energy; and they who now depreciate Italy, would own it was the times, not the heart of her people, that had changed.

Notwithstanding the asperity with which the poet addressed him, the emperor never failed in loading Petrarca with the most unequivocal marks of his admiration and esteem.

Finding himself still unsuccessful in instigating the emperor to rouse himself in the country's defense, Petrarca revolved one other plan for its welfare; this was to persuade Urban V, who had now succeeded to

the papal crown, to transfer his court from Avignon to Rome, or some other Italian state.

Urban at length acceded to his entreaties, seconded as they were by the public voice; and, proceeding to Italy, he fixed his residence at Viterbo. Repenting, however, of his too hasty cession, after the expiration of a very short period, he returned again to Avignon. It is said that Petrarca actually shed tears at this act of disgraceful weakness. He beheld the Church itself tottering,—the mystic bark of St. Peter seemed shipwrecked amid the quicksands of contention; and he mourned the fate of modern Rome with the sacred enthusiasm with which the olden prophets grieved over their falling Jerusalem. He was preparing a remonstrance to Urban when the news of that pope's death reached him, it having taken place almost immediately after he had re-assumed his rule beyond the Alps.

This was Petrarca's last effort for the salvation of his country. His health declined, and he resolved to seek in retirement the repose he so much needed. Rejecting, therefore, Visconti's repeated solicitations that he would fix his residence at Milan, (his sovereignty,) he quitted Padua, where he had dwelt some time with his friend and patron Francesco da Carrara, and retired to Arqua, a little village situated upon the summit of a gently sloping hill, crowned by another which sheltered it from the north wind. Enamored with the Euganean hills, he here built himself an elegant little dwelling, and

in its solitude tasted again repose and health. Once more the appeal of friendship drew him from his retreat. Francesco da Carrara, at war with the Venetians, was compelled to sue for peace, but which he could obtain only upon the most humiliating terms.

The now infirm poet accepted the mission to the Venetian senate, who, wrought upon by his reasoning and eloquence, yielded the desired truce; and Petrarca once more returned to his retirement in the proud consciousness that he had, for the time at least, saved his munificent patron from total ruin.

It was at this period that Florence,—the inexorable foe to Dante, whose influence had lured thither a foreign sword to the destruction of his native land,—restored to Petrarca, the promoter of peace, his paternal inheritance; his exile was revoked, and he was elected head of the Florentine university.

Petrarca accepted with tears of gratitude these proofs of his country's affection; but another and a brighter home now awaited him, and he felt that his summons had gone forth.

In the midst of study, in the exercise of his christian duties, he looked forward to death with cheerfulness and resignation, and on the 18th of July, 1374, at the age of seventy, he resigned his spirit to its Creator. Italy,—Europe itself,—the world of literature,—alike mourned this event as a public calamity. The clergy and nobles, with the inhabitants of Padua, equally desirous of marking their respect for his honored remains, flocked

to Arqua, where Bonaventura da Peraga, with almost regal pomp, pronounced an eulogy over the illustrious dead. In obedience to his last request, he was interred before the door of the church at Arqua, not in an humble grave, as he had desired, but in a handsome tomb of black marble, supported by four columns, under which appears a neat Latin inscription.

Petrarca has been compared by Boccaccio to Livy, by Coluccio to Virgil. Gifted with a mind free, pliant, and enthusiastic for poetry, it is probable he would have been charmed by the model which taught him to paint a beautiful nature in her own glowing colors, and to depict the heart's best affections with the truth and vivacity of his own bright imagination. But from his study of Livy he derived advantages more solid and exalted. From him he learned that concentrated love of liberty and independence, that taste for solitude and moderation, that veneration for Rome and his native Italy, which ever distinguished him; and proclaimed him to be an excellent man, a good citizen, a philosopher, and a christian.

In his person Petrarca was handsome; his complexion was neither fair nor dark, and his eyes beamed with fire and intelligence.

In youth he was punctiliously careful about his dress, and prided himself exceedingly on his fine hair, though at the age of twenty-five it had begun rapidly to change to grey. His figure was slight, and he was remarkable for his agility in leaping, and running, and for his

adroitness in all manly sports. He played the lute admirably, which he continued until an advanced age. Exceedingly moderate in his diet, he seemed always to prefer the primitive refreshment of fruit, herbs, and water, to a more luxurious indulgence. Naturally impetuous, Petrarca however acquired a habit of self-command, so that he was never known to wound another's feelings by unguarded violence. Faithful in his friendships, of frugal habits, though of most generous inclinations, he cared not for riches, or rather he shrank from the petty monotony by which they are obtained. His thirst for fame and its immortality was to him the Ægis, preserving him from the contamination of a licentious age; while his one ruling passion, (his attachment for Laura,) became in him a sentiment ennobling his mind by its divine, its purified essence. The pure breathings of his lyre will steal in grateful incense to the heart, so long as Parnassus holds its lofty empire in the world, and Helicon flows a brightening stream unsullied by the turgid waters of impurity.

We shall conclude this faint sketch of the poet's life, by quoting his own words upon a subject which had so powerful an influence upon his character: they are in reply to a remonstrance from St. Augustine, upon the weakness of suffering his passion to hold such an ascendancy over his mind. "Thou wilt not deny," he continues, "that the little good thou beholdest in me, is the work of *her* hands. However undeserving I may be of my present name and glory, still I had not at-

tained this proud eminence, had not she, by her noble precepts, warmed into life the feeble germs of virtue, nature had implanted within me. She it was who withdrew my youthful heart from its associating impurity; and, by the power of sympathy, made it pant for the contemplation of all that was sublime—thus, by love, changing the very nature of the lover. Never has the audacious and sharpened tooth of calumny dared to lacerate her spotless fame—not one hath presumed to breathe his censure either upon her actions, her words, or her looks; while they who confound alike all that should excite respect, silently evince their veneration of her, by leaving her in peace. Is it marvellous that one so pure, should have awakened within me the desire of winning a fame bright as her own, while my youthful aspirations sought no other recompense, save her approval, who alone gave me pleasure on earth! And thou wouldst have me forget her—thou wouldst bid me love her less, who, in withdrawing me from a contact with the multitude, elected herself my guide in every undertaking—was the gentle spur to my sluggish spirit—and fanned anew into flame my half-extinguished genius."

Petrarca's periods are soft and harmonious. In his song of love, he created a number of poetic beauties to supply its deficiency in the varied charms with which the epic poem is more prodigal. To clothe in undying beauty the unvarying spirit of his verse, required a genius fruitful as his own—a fancy bright, ardent, rich,

in glowing images, and feelings thoroughly tinctured with the deep colorings of his own Platonic doctrines. It demanded all the exaltation of his passion—all the beauty and virtue of Laura, to create the delicacy of his absorbing sentiment; in a word, it asked *his* magic pen alone, whose purity, appropriate apostrophe, and colloquial power, renders him the first of sonneteers. He ingeniously alternates the tender with the harsher verse—the vigorous with the simple style, and weaves them together with a grace at once studied and natural. The creator of a new meter, he gave another cadence—a new impetus to the language; while his imagery, reflected from the fresh and varied tints of a bounteous nature, stamped him the faithful and graceful artist. With a profound knowledge of the human heart, his sententious effusions reveal his long and deep meditation. But when Laura died, his lyre, which had only hitherto breathed forth the tenderest strains—sweet and consonant to mortal ear, suddenly awoke to a more vigorous, to a sublimer melody—it seemed to pursue that angel-spirit, in tones more harmonized to its ethereal essence. But if his song attained the sublime, in seeming to penetrate the celestial home of his Laura;—with what majesty does it break forth, displaying the master's varied power, in his address to his country!—What anxiety to heal the wounds he had so long watched desolating his beauteous Italy! What enthusiastic desire to turn back the foreign sword, to save it from

the rapacity of Germany, are evinced in his beautiful invocation of peace, beginning "Italia mia."

Petrarca seemed fully aware of the necessity of visiting other countries, to obtain a knowledge of their habits and customs, that, in contrasting them with his own, his enlarged perception might extract *that* which might prove advantageous to the legislation of his native land. Hence, though we cannot regard Petrarca as the traveler of the more distant regions, we may refer to him as the first example of those who have visited neighboring countries for the purpose of benefitting their own. His epistles abound with the details of his visits, and prove him to have been occupied in the study of the literature, traditions, and government of the various cities where he had sojourned. The noble mind ever delights in suffering others to draw from its amassed treasures. A stranger to prejudice, Petrarca revolved in his mind how he could effectually promote the circulation of knowledge; and to this end having collected a splendid library, he presented it to the Venetians, with the proviso that it should be thrown open gratuitously to young students. Thus alike encouraging and diffusing literature, he became the oracle of Europe. Correspondents from every country deluged him with verses and addresses. France, Italy, Greece, Germany, England, equally consulted him, styling him the promoter of literature, and the arbitrator of learning. Succeeding ages may have boasted of having attained a higher range of learning, of their vast discoveries in art, of

the wider dissemination of talent; but the refined taste will ever delight to look back upon this pure dawn of re-awakened literature; and, while all men gratefully acknowledge the hand that rescued the lore of antiquity from the oblivion of the dark ages, they must reverence the cradle which nursed into existence at once the poet, the scholar, and the Christian—where knowledge was embellished by simplicity of habit, and habit in its turn was dignified by mental elevation.

Few men, however distinguished, have combined genius and virtue to a higher degree than Petrarca; but perfection is not an earthly gem, therefore we ought not to suppose, that he, of like "glassy essence" with his fellow-beings, was wholly exempt from a participation in the human lot of error. If this be so; and should I appear to have wilfully suppressed its record, I can offer in extenuation but this reflection: that the noblest object of a biographer is, to give immortality to virtue, and to awaken in the present age a fervent admiration and respect for the man, who, by his works, has shed an unquenched and unquenchable luster upon that which has passed away.

CANZONE AND SESTINA.

CANZONE.

HE MOURNS THE DESOLATION WHICH HE FORSEES WILL BE THE DESTINY OF ITALY FROM THE DISUNION OF ALL ITS RULERS, WHOM HE CONJURES NOT TO SUFFER THEMSELVES TO BECOME THE PREY OF BARBARIANS.

Oh Italy! although my voice may fail
To heal the wounds thy beauteous form assail,
I joy to speak my sympathetic woe
With ye the Tiber, Arno, and the Po,
Upon whose shores I now in sadness dwell,
And trace the grief which doth my bosom swell.
Oh thou, Heaven's ruler! hearken to my prayer,
And let *that* pity which once made Thee share
Our mortal tenement, again expand
In blessings on thy own—thy cherished land.
Behold, oh Father! from how light a thing
This warfare long and direful doth spring:
Oh! where relentless Mars hath steeled the heart,
Do thou thy soothing influence impart,
Awake its kindlier flow; though humble, still
Make me thy instrument to speak thy will.

Oh ye* by nature destined to command,
To guide the reins of this your beauteous land,
Sweet pity's tie ne'er binds ye to its love,
Else why the strangers' weapon† should it prove?
Oh! wherefore doth barbarian blood deface
Your smiling meadows, and your country's grace?
Your hearts in vain delusion are enshrined,
Ye boast your foresight—and alas! are blind.
Whoe'er would seek for love, or faith behold,
Amid a venal crew, exchanged for gold?
He 'mid his ranks the greater number knows
Stands but the more encompassed by his foes.
Oh frightful torrent! borne from foreign strands
To inundate our sweet, our verdant lands;
If we ourselves have waked its direful flow,
Where should we seek for comfort in our woe?

When nature bade the towering Alps arise,
To stand our barrier 'twixt the German skies,
Oh! well our future safety she foresaw
To shield us from our neighbor's furious war.
But ye! your blind desires have armed the foe
To turn health's current to the leper's woe.
Alike enclosed within one common fold
The tameless beast and lamb we now behold,
And thus it is the gentlest nature sighs

**Oh Ye.* He addresses all the princes of Italy.
†*Strangers' weapon.* The German mercenaries.

To hold a fellowship it ne'er can prize.
To plant within our grief a sharper sting,
These strangers from that lawless nation spring,
On whom stern Marius poured his sword's fierce gall,
That Time still rings his triumph—and their fall,
Recording how the hero panting stood,
Nor aught could find to quench his thirst—but blood.

'Twere vain to tell of Cæsar's conquering hand,
Where'er he came *their* blood defaced the land:
But now I know not what ill star presides
That Heaven from us his kindly favor hides.
Ye lords, who thus our country's rule sustain,
What owe we to your mercy and your reign?
Our land which shone the fairest gem of earth
Now laid a wreck, from private faction's birth.
What crime of his? what justice of your own?
What fearful destiny to us unknown,
Impels ye on the wretch fresh grief to pour,
To crush the fortune that had drooped before?
That makes ye harbor in your ranks a crew
Who sell for gold their souls, and life-blood too!
Alas? 'tis truth alone inspires my tongue,
No individual hate my soul hath wrung.
Perceive ye not,* my lords, their acts evince
The treachery of that dark Bavarian prince,

**Perceive ye not.* Petrarch alludes to Lewis of Bavaria, who, entering Italy, caused the Visconti to be arrested, his most faith-

Who beckoned death to turn and mock the foe.
Alas! the shame we meet is heavier woe
Than were our land enslaved, but feud more dread
Now wastes your blood than that by others fed.
Oh! from the morn's third hour commence the task
Of self-communing; ye yourselves will ask,
"How can we minister to others' good,
Who naught of evil ever have withstood?"
Ye boast proud Latin blood, ye I invoke
To cast away this hideous baleful yoke;
Beware how such an idol ye create,
As unsubstantial as his titled state!
It were foul shame our leaden neighbors thus
Should win a mental conquest over us!

"Oh! is not this the soil where I was born?
The cradle that sustained my life's young dawn?
My father-land, which holds my heart's sweet trust?
My gentle mother, 'neath whose pitying dust
My all of kindred sleep in calm repose?
Oh! let these thoughts sweet Mercy's bands unclose!
Let blest Compassion to your hearts reply,
And heal the wound that wakes your people's sigh;
No other hope save *that* in Heaven is theirs,
And *that* yourselves vouchsafe unto their prayers;

---

ful allies; and drove from Pisa the children of Castruccio, to whom he owed the greatest obligations. He seemed ever preparing for battle, but never came to an engagement.

But Mercy speak, and armed against the foe,
Italian valor soon shall lay him low,
Nor long the struggle, for the fire of yore
Is yet unquenched within our bosom's store.

Oh! mark, my lords, Time's winged and rapid flight,
Whilst hand in hand Life fades before our sight;
Mark Death's pursuit to check your full career,
His grasp will pluck ye—think while breathing here,
Undecked by pomp, or human love, the soul
Too soon must seek alone* its awful goal:
Oh! in life's progress let not wrath prevail
To the sweet calm of peace—that adverse gale;
But let the moments desecrated now
In wreathing tortures for your people's brow,
Be hallowed by some strife in virtue's cause;
Some act whose record is deserved applause;
Some mental impulse, which may nobly claim
The hope of others' welfare as its aim:
For though on earth, man may blest joy create,
To win his welcome at high Heaven's gate.
And now, my song, I warn thee that thy strain
Naught else but courtesy must breathe again;
For thou amid the proud must hold thy way,
Who, blinded by base custom's ancient sway,

The soul alone. The soul will seek its Creator alone, unattended by the pomp of earthly and regal splendor.

No other will, save *that*, can ever know,
And stand arrayed to truth the constant foe.
Amid the noble few, who virtue love,
Success will be thy lot alone to prove;
Demand of them, who dare thy cause avow?
Since peace must be thy theme eternal now.

SESTINA.

HE MOURNS THAT DEATH HAS DEPRIVED HIM OF HIS EVERY TREASURE, AND YET REFUSES TO PUT AN END TO HIS MISERY AND HIS EXISTENCE.

My smiling fortune wreathing hours of joy,—
My days of sunshine set in peaceful nights,—
The sigh of gladness,—and the tide of joy,
Waking its gentle flow in verse and rhyme;
√ So swiftly have they changed to grief and tears,
That life is hateful, and my hope is death.

Oh! cruel, dark, inexorable death!
How hast thou stilled my every pulse of joy,
In life awoke a ceaseless fount of tears,
My sunshine veiled and wrapped in gloom of night;
My sighs refuse to breathe themselves in rhyme,
My cruel fate can ne'er be wreathed in song.

How crushed the inspiration of my song,
To own pale wrath its theme, and withering death.
Where are the verses flown, the tuneful rhyme,
Harmonious to blest virtue's pensive joy?
Where now love's tale, that once beguiled my nights?
My ev'ry thought—my eloquence—is tears.
Hope mingled once such sweetness in my tears,
Its gentle food refined my harsher song,

And sat in watchfulness throughout my nights;
My tears are now more bitter far than death,
Since shadowed is that face of virtuous joy,
The lofty inspiration of my rhyme.

Love woke the theme, (so beauteous for my rhyme),
In those bright eyes—it now is changed to tears,
For memory dwells with grief and vanished joy;
My thoughts' changed echo speaks another song,
It prays thee once again, pale haggard death!
To free from hopeless day, life's gloomy nights.

Sleep's wingéd hope hath fled my aching nights,
The ceaseless tone of my discordant rhyme
No other subject now returns, but death;
And thus my strain is broken into tears;
For love's sweet reign knows not such varied songs;
For mine is grief, as *once* it told of joy.

Oh! once unrivalled was my bosom's joy:
My daily grief now equals but my nights:
Its burthen's sad increase will swell my song
With heart-felt chords—returned in tearful rhyme.
My life's blest food was hope—it now is tears;
I call on death to aid my strife with death.

Death wakes within me death; and only death
Can to my sight return that face of joy,
Which smiled again to mirth my sighs and tears;

Awoke the balmy air—soft dew of nights
In which I fanned my better thoughts to rhyme,
While Love exalted then, my feeble song.

Oh! would, like Orpheus, I could raise the song,
To lure my Laura from her home of death!
(Euridice he won—without a rhyme):
Oh! then my life would taste increase of joy.
That may not be: then 'mid my sorrowing nights
I would that she might staunch my fountained tears.

How deep the fount where long hath flowed my tears,
As I recalled my woes in pensive song;
Yet, Love, from thee I hope not, better nights.
So I have urged my soul to pray that death
Would bear me hence to *her* still home of joy,
For whom I weep, and chant my constant rhyme.

But if so proud a flight dares not my rhyme,
To seek, *that one* beyond the vale of tears,
Who, by her beauty, wakes e'en Heaven to joy,—
She then must sadly hail my altered song:
She joyed perchance to hear it once—ere death—
A sun to her—set darkly on *my* nights.

Oh ye! whose sighs record more hopeful nights,
Who list love's tale, and wreathe it into rhyme,
Vouchsafe your aid, in beckoning to me—death,
That haven for the wretched, and their tears:

Oh! pray that death would change his wonted song;
Man grieves at *that*—to me would be such joy!

Death's welcome may be *this*, or future nights;
But now with broken song, and anguished rhymes,
I pray his icy hand to still my tears.

SONNETS.

SONNET I.

THE POET SEEMS TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE WEAKNESS OF HIS PASSION.*

Oh ye! who list the echo of my sighs,
Whose voice my heart's fond aliment became,
When wandering youth pursued its doubtful aim,
And but in part I held my present guise;

My song, which doth each varied style comprise,
As hope, or vain despair awakes its flame,
May win your pity, if not pardon claim
From all, who too have mourned love's fatal prize.

But well I know, if to the passing throng
A problem long I dwelt, within my breast
Too oft the pang of shame would darkly gleam:

And this, the fruit of my fond, doting wrong,
Repentant grief—while I this truth confest,
That each fair earthly joy is but a dream!

---

*This is not properly his first sonnet, but it is so placed agreeably to the order in which Petrarch himself arranged his Italian works at an advanced age.

4. *In part.* The poet alludes to his changed appearance from youth to age, while his mind retains its sentiment for Laura as in its earliest vigor.

13. *Repentant grief.* He means the repentant impulse the heart experiences in the consciousness of having indulged in error which may provoke the retribution of heaven.

SONNET II.

HE DETAILS THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS ATTACHMENT.

To win a graceful vengeance of his foe,
And thus to punish in a single day
My oft offense, like him who tracks his prey
With noiseless caution, Love assumed his bow;

Virtue, which in my eyes and heart should grow
Alone, within the latter watchful lay;
When lo! Love's dart through the unguarded way
My heart attained, which ne'er had felt a blow.

My stricken Virtue stunned by the assault,
Too feeble to assume my armed defence,
Beheld the hour had passed when aid availed;

From that defeat why did she not exalt
My soul to that blest mount, whose recompense
To win for me she now had gladly hailed?

---

3. *Oft offense.* He had hitherto resisted love's assaults,

6. *Virtue which &c.* This is one of the most obscure passages in Petrarch. It is generally thus construed: "That virtue had retired within the heart to defend itself through the eyes." The poet's meaning was this: Virtue, whose office it is to defend alike the eyes and the heart, had retired into the heart, leaving the eyes defenseless, and thus through the eyes death won its entrance.

13. *Blest mount.* The steep mound of religion (the only refuge in his weakness,) but which if not sought in time is difficult to attain.

SONNET III.

HE SPECIFIES THE DAY ON WHICH HE FIRST MET LAURA. IT WAS THE GOOD FRIDAY OF THE YEAR 1327.

It was the day that Phœbus veiled his light
In dread remembrance of a Maker's doom,
Lady! thine eyes did first my heart illume,
Their beauty then enchained my aching sight;

I deemed not in that hour of mental night
Love's shafts would still pursue an earthly tomb,
The hour that nature mourned, woke too my gloom,
While I unconscious dwelt, secure in might.

Disarmed, Love found me then, while through my eyes
He winged an easy passage to my heart,
And formed the channel of grief's ebb and flow:

But, sure it seems me, Love dishonored lies
Defenseless thus, to sheathe in me his dart,
To arm *thee* quite, yet veil from *me* his bow.

---

11. ***Ebb and flow.*** By *ebb* is meant ingress, by *flow* egress. The eyes form the ingress of tears, being the vehicle by which every sad impression awakened by exterior objects is conveyed to the heart; again, they are the egress of tears, for through them flows the tide of grief which exterior objects have awakened in the heart.

SONNET IV.

HE CELEBRATES LAURA'S RESIDENCE AT CABRIERES.

The High Eternal, in whose works supreme
The Master's vast creative power hath spoke:
At whose command each circling sphere awoke,
Jove mildly rose, and Mars with fiercer beam:

To earth he came, to ratify the scheme
Revealed to us through prophecy's dark cloak,
To sound redemption, speak man's fallen yoke,
He chose the humblest for that heavenly theme.

But he conferred not on imperial Rome
His birth's renown; he chose a lowlier sky,—
To stand, through him, the proudest spot on earth!

And now doth shine within its humble home
A star, that doth each other so outvie,
That grateful nature hails its lovely birth.

---

13. *A star.* He means Laura, and alludes to her retired home at Cabrieres. The beauty of the quartine, and the first terzina of this sonnet, must be an apology for its translation, as the poet cannot fail to be censured for the profane enthusiasm he throws into the Chiusa.

SONNET V.

HE PERSUADES HIMSELF TO RENOUNCE HIS LOVE FOR LAURA, AS HE FEARS IT IS NOT RETURNED.

My tameless will doth recklessly pursue
Her, who, unshackled by love's heavy chain,
Flies swiftly from its chase, while I in vain
My fettered journey pantingly renew;

The safer track I offer to its view,
But hopeless is my power to restrain,
It rides regardless of the spur or rein;
Love makes it scorn the hand that would subdue.

The triumph won, the bridle all its own,
Without one curb I stand within its power,
And my destruction helplessly presage:

It guides me to that laurel, ever known,
To all who seek the healing of its flower,
To aggravate the wound it should assuage.

---

3. *Flies swiftly.* She flies, in comparison with his pursuit, which is clogged by the chain of love by which he is bound.

12. *That laurel*—in Italian *Al Lauro*—a play upon the name of Laura.

SONNET VI.

WRITTEN IN ANSWER TO A FRIEND WHO HAD ASKED THE POET'S ADVICE AS TO WHETHER HE SHOULD PURSUE HIS STUDY OF THE ART OF POETRY, OTHERS HAVING DISSUADED HIM FROM IT.

Man's helpless luxury, his slothful ease,
Hath chased each virtue from this breathing world,
And from her throne hath Nature rudely hurled,
To bow, o'ercome, at Custom's base decrees:

Heaven's glowing spark few spirits care to seize,
To leave the track where they life's stream have curled;
Who dares the mound, to grasp its banner furled,
Stands forth a mark from whom the worldling flees.

Say what the laurel? what the myrtle's bloom?
Go, empty dreamer! —such their base-born cry,
Where worldly profit is their only aim:

To tread thy path alone may be thy doom,
Yet, gentle spirit, with my suit comply,
Complete thy task, and win the road to fame.

---

5. *Heaven's glowing spark.* Inspiration, whose offsprings are poetry, and a taste for the sciences and the fine arts.

12. *To tread thy path.* The path of literature, which few pursued at that period.

SONNET VII.

WRITTEN, WITH AN ACCOMPANYING PRESENT OF SOME TRUFFLES, TO A FRIEND, (DE SADE, SAYS THE BISHOP COLONNA). THE POET DESCRIBES THE SPRING, AND CONTRASTS HIS OWN FEELINGS.

When Taurus in his house doth Phœbus keep,
There pours so bright a virtue from his crest
That Nature wakes, and stands in beauty drest,
The flowering meadows start with joy from sleep:

Nor they alone rejoice — earth's bosom deep
(Though not one beam illumes her night of rest)
Responsive smiles, and from a fruitful breast
Gives forth her treasures for her sons to reap.

Thus she, who dwells amid her sex a sun,
Shedding upon my soul her eyes' full light,
Each thought creates, each deed, each word of love:

But though my heart's proud mastery she had won,
Alas! within me dwells eternal night:
My spirit ne'er Spring's genial breath doth prove.

---

9. *Thus she.* *She*, Laura, when she turns towards him the rays of her beautiful eyes, creates the thoughts and ideas which he afterward embodies in his poems. But though she alternately looks upon him with pride and compassion, with approbation or anger, his heart, ever the prey of disquietude, knows not the calm and serenity of nature's spring.

SONNET VIII.

COMPOSED IN HONOR OF STEPHEN COLONNA, WHOM HE INVITES TO HIS SOLITARY RETREAT AT VAL' CHIUSA.

Glorious Colonna! thou, the Latins' hope,
The proud supporter of our lofty name,
Thou holdest thy path of virtue still the same,
Amid the thunderings of Rome's Jove—the Pope.

Not here do human structures interlope
The fir to rival, or the pine-tree's claim,
The soul may revel in poetic flame
Upon yon mountain's green and gentle slope.

And thus from earth to heaven the spirit soars,
While Philomel her tale of woe repeats
Amid the sympathizing shades of night,

Thus through man's breast love's current sweetly pours:
Yet still thine absence half the joy defeats,—
Alas! my friend, why dim such radiant light?

---

4. *Rome's Jove.* By Jove, he means Benedict Caietan d'Agrani, who, by his intrigues, succeeded in obtaining the Papal crown, and which he assumed under the title of Boniface VIII. Boniface was a Guelph, and bore an implacable enmity to the Colonna family, who were Ghibelines.

8. *Gentle slope.* The soft beauty of the mountain's slope, which, ascending and descending, inspires poetical thought.

13. *Thine absence.* After having enumerated every charm that nature can present to the eye, he marks the value of his friend's society, by declaring his absence renders *that* incomplete, which few would not proclaim entire and perfect.

SONNET IX.

HE DESCRIBES HOW HIS SENTIMENT FOR LAURA BECOMES EXALTED AS HE MARKS HER SUPERIORITY TO HER SEX.

When Love, whose home is on her beauteous brow,
Appears awhile amid the rival fair,
The more I feel her charms beyond compare,
The more exalted doth my passion grow:

I bless the hour when first my eyes dared throw
Their glance aspiring on a form so rare,
And bid my heart in gratitude to wear
The honor which such favor doth bestow.

She wakes, within, the thought of purest love
Which from the creature rises to its God
Unsullied by the breath of mortal flame:

Through her the springs of inspiration move,
Opening so bright a path from earth's dull clod,
That heaven's blest joys e'en now my soul doth claim.

---

13. *Opening so bright, &c.* He represents the study of poetry as passing existence in an innocent yet beautiful dream — and journeying to heaven by a path strewn with flowers.

SONNET X.

HE DESCRIBES HIS GRIEF ON QUITTING LAURA*

I look behind each step I onward trace
Scarce able to support my wearied frame,
Ah wretched me! I pantingly exclaim,
And from her atmosphere new strength embrace;

I think on her I leave — my heart's best grace —
My lengthened journey — life's capricious flame —
I pause, in withering fear, with purpose tame,
While down my cheek tears quick each other chase.

My doubting heart thus questions in my grief:
Whence comes it that existence thou canst know
When from thy spirit thou dost dwell entire?

Love, holy love, my heart then answers brief:
Such privilege I do on all bestow
Who feed my flame with nought of earthly fire!

---

*It was on the occasion of his departure from Avignon, in 1331, when he visited France, Germany, &c.

4. *From her atmosphere.* He thus exclaims as he looks behind, and in that suspiration inhales again the air Laura breathes. A strange conceit, and in comparison with the grandeur of the chiusa of this sonnet, it displays the relative power of the giant and the dwarf.

14. *Who feed my flame, &c.* Love, in its purified essence, demands not so imperatively the presence of the object. It becomes the love of a mortal for a beautiful spirit through its elevating the soul to the love of its Creator.

SONNET. XI.

HE CONSOLES HIMSELF UPON THE SPEEDY TERMINATION OF HIS GRIEF, AS HE THINKS HIS LIFE IS ADVANCING TO ITS CLOSE.

As I advance within life's closing shade
Which there reflects how brief is human woe,
More rapid doth appear Time's certain flow,
And hope is stript of vision's dazzling aid.

I speak my thoughts. Ah! soon love's dream must fade,
For as the earth imbibes the helpless snow,
So woos she now this fleshly shrine below;
Yet peace is ours when Nature's debt is paid.

And with it too *that* hope must cancelled lie,
Which long the heart hath cheated with its smile,
And joy shall cease—and anger, fear, and pain,

Man then will own, with pure awakened eye,
An empty shadow doth life's path beguile,
For which too oft he sighs and pants in vain.

SONNET XII.

IS SEEKING THE MOST SECLUDED RETREATS, THAT MEN MAY NOT WITNESS THE GRIEF OF HIS ATTACHMENT.

With lingering, nerveless step, alone I sigh,
And trace the spot most desert in the land,
I mark each impress on the yielding sand,
That every human footstep I may fly:

No other hope but solitude, have I,
Man's glance of strange inquiry to withstand,
My spirit's light no more by joy is fanned,
And now its withering flame do all descry.

And still alas! too well do I believe
That woods, and floods, and mountains may reveal
My life's sad tale, to her alone unknown:

But wild soe'er the journey I achieve,
Love ever on my track doth closely steal,
While we a blest communion fondly own.

---

4. *Footstep.* That is the impress which footsteps leave on the ground.

7. *Spirit's light.* A most poetical allusion. He makes cheerfulness a burning light in the heart which communicates its flame to the countenance.

11. *To her.* Laura

SONNET XIII.

DESPAIRING OF FINDING PEACE IN HIS UNFORTUNATE ATTACHMENT, HE HAS MEDITATED SELF-DESTRUCTION, BUT THAT HE IS WITHHELD BY THE FEAR OF MERITING A HEAVIER DOOM.

Oh ! had I deemed that death had freed my soul
From Love's tormenting, overwhelming thought,
To crush its aching burthen I had sought,
My wearied life had hastened to its goal;

My shivering bark yet feared another shoal,
To find one tempest with another bought,
Thus poised 'twixt earth and heaven I dwell as naught,
Nor daring to assume my life's control.

But sure 'tis time that death's relentless bow,
Had winged *that* fatal arrow to my heart,
So often bathed in life's dark crimson tide :

But though I crave he would this boon bestow,
He to my cheek his impress doth impart,
And yet o'erlooks me in her fearful stride.

---

5. *Another shoal.* A passage from one ill to another—the misery of this world added to the punishment denounced against the suicide hereafter.

12. *This boon.* Still speaking of death.

13. *To my cheek.* The ashy hue of his cheek is that of death.

SONNET XIV.

HE INVEIGHS AGAINST LAURA'S MIRROR, FOR IN BEHOLDING HER OWN REFLECTION, SHE BECOMES ENAMORED OF HERSELF. PETRARCH INGENIOUSLY ENDEAVORS TO REMOVE THE IMPRESSION, BY WARNING HER OF THE FATE OF NARCISSUS.

My mirrored foe reflects, alas! so far
Those eyes which Heaven and Love have honored too!
Yet not his charms thou dost enamored view,
But all thine own, and they beyond compare:

Oh lady! thou hast chased me at its prayer
From thy heart's throne, where I so fondly grew;
Oh wretched exile! though too well I knew
A reign with thee I were unfit to share.

But were I ever fixed thy bosom's mate,
A flattering mirror should not me supplant,
And make thee scorn me in thy self-delight;

Thou surely must recal Narcissus' fate,
But if like him thy doom should thee enchant,
What meed were worthy of a flower so bright?

---

2. *Heaven and love &c.* Heaven did honor to her eyes by making them so beautiful, and Love now honors them by making them his dwelling-place.

3. *Not his charms.* It is not the mirror's beauty that Laura views, but her own.

SONNET XV.

HE AGAIN LAMENTS THE BEAUTY OF LAURA, AS THE CAUSE OF HIS GRIEF, AND DEPLORES ANEW THE MIRROR'S REFLECTION.

Those golden tresses, teeth of pearly white,
Those cheeks' fair roses blooming to decay
Do in their beauty to my soul convey
The poisoned arrows from my aching sight.

Thus sad and briefly must my days take flight,
For life with woe not long on earth will stay;
But more I blame that mirror's flattering sway,
Which thou hast wearied with thy self-delight.

Its power my bosom's sovereign too hath stilled,
Who prayed thee in my suit — *now he* is mute,
Since thou art captured by thyself alone :

Death's seeds it hath within my heart instilled,
For Lethe's stream its form doth constitute,
And makes thee lose each image but thine own.

SONNET XVI.

HE RECOUNTS WITH SATISFACTION THE ASSOCIATIONS OF HIS ATTACHMENT.

Oh blessed be the day, the month, the year,
The season's sky, the moment, and the hour,
The beauteous clime, the spot where first the power
Of two bright eyes enchained me in their sphere:

And blest the grief that woke the welcome tear,
When love first hailed me to his witching bower,
The wound too soon I owned my heart's fond dower,
The arrow that could thus my bosom sear.

Blest too those oft inflections of my voice
Whose sounds compose the name of her I love;
My hopes, my tears, my sighs, be ye too blest;

My songs whose fame proclaims my heart's sweet choice,
Blest be my thoughts whose fond devotion proves
Her only image is their hallowed guest.

SONNET XVII.

HE PRAYS HEAVEN'S GRACE TO GIVE A WORTHIER CHANNEL TO HIS THOUGHTS.

Oh thou, Heaven's father! though my days are gone,
My nights consumed in yielding to the flame
Her fatal beauty kindled in my frame,
The day her light upon my spirit shone;

My soul illumine, that it soon may own
A new existence, and a nobler aim,
And in *that* foe awake the blush of shame,
Who hath his snare around me vainly thrown.

Eleven circling years have o'er me rolled
Since first I bowed submissive to a yoke
Most galling to the slave the most resigned:

This grief unworthy of myself behold!
Let holier dreams my wandering thoughts invoke.
Lord! of thy sacrifice my soul remind!

religion.

SONNET XVIII.

WRITTEN IN HONOR OF THE FAMOUS PAINTER SIMON MEMMI, WHO HAVING ARRIVED AT AVIGNON AT THE DESIRE OF BENEDICT XII, TO ADORN THE PONTIFICAL PALACE, WAS REQUESTED BY THE POET TO TAKE LAURA'S PORTRAIT.

Had Polycletus in proud rivalry
On her his model gazed a thousand years,
Not half the beauty to *my* soul appears,
In fatal conquest, e'er could *he* descry.

But, Simon, thou wast then in Heaven's blest sky,
Ere she, my fair one, left her native spheres,
To trace a loveliness this world reveres
Was thus thy task, from Heaven's reality.

Yes—thine the portrait Heaven alone could wake,
This clime, nor earth, such beauty could conceive,
Where droops the spirit 'neath its earthly shrine:

The soul's reflected grace was thine to take,
Which not on earth thy painting could achieve,
Where mortal limits all the powers confine.

---

3. *Not half the beauty, &c.* Polycletus would not have seen half Laura's beauty; and why? Because he would still have wanted that sentiment, whose bright imagination invests the heart's idol with attributes perhaps only possible in its own creation.

SONNET XIX.

HE RESOLVES TO CAST OFF THE WEAKNESS WHICH OPPRESSES HIM, RELYING UPON OUR SAVIOUR'S ASSISTANCE.

Alas! the burthen of my sinful woe
And doubful course, doth so oppress my soul,
I tremble, ere I reach my life's dread goal,
I may succumb to him, my spirit's foe.

The best of friends might well on me bestow
That succour, shed from his supreme control,
But He from poor mortality hath stole,
And man in vain doth seek for Him below.

In echoing thunders still doth he proclaim:
"Come ye to me, who 'neath life's burthen mourn,
No baser chain let your approach oppose."

Oh that his grace, my love, election's claim,
Would, like the dove, my soul with wings adorn,
That I from earth might flee, and find repose!

SONNET XX.

WRITTEN AFTER THE VISIT OF A PERSON OF CONSEQUENCE TO AVIGNON PURPOSELY TO BEHOLD THE FAR-FAMED LAURA. IT IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ROBERT OF NAPLES, WHO REPROACHING PETRARCH FOR HAVING SO EXAGGERATED HER BEAUTY, THE POET SENT HIM THIS REPLY:

The playful zephyrs, in their wanton sport,
Fantastic hung upon each golden tress:
Her eyes — but now how quenched their loveliness—
Then beamed a light that did the heart transport:

Her cheek soft pity's tint did faintly court,
She seemed a vision though in mortal dress,
What marvel that my bosom's magnet press
To that charmed point which can its power extort.

Her step bespoke an angel's form and grace,
Her voice another harmony awoke
Than that which springs alone from mortal sound:

I saw the child of Heaven's ethereal space,
And though no more a spirit I invoke,
The slackened bow heals not the arrow's wound.

---

14. *The slackened bow.* As the bow which is slackened after the discharge of its arrow cannot heal the wound the dart has inflicted, so affection fades not with the beauty which has awakened it.

SONNET XXI.

WRITTEN IN CONDOLENCE TO HIS BROTHER GHERARDO, UPON THE DEATH OF A LADY TO WHOM HE WAS ATTACHED. HE CONSOLES HIM, BY ADMONISHING HIM TO IMITATE HER VIRTUES.

The beauteous lady thou didst love so well
Too soon hath from our regions winged her flight,
To find I ween a home 'mid realms of light;
So much in virtue did she here excel.

The heart's twin key of joy and woe can dwell
No more with her — then re-assume thy might,
Pursue her by the path most swift and right,
Nor let aught earthly stay thee by its spell.

Thus from thy heaviest burthen being freed,
Each other thou canst easier dispel,
And an unfreighted pilgrim seek thy sky;

Too well, thou seest, how much thy soul hath need,
(Ere yet it tempt the shadowy vale) to quell
Each earthly hope, since all that lives must die.

---

9. *Thus from the heaviest burthen, &c.* Deprived of the strongest tie that could attach him to earth — the being of his love — Petrarch tells him he will find it an easier task to disengage himself from less dear associations, and he will pursue his journey to heaven like one who has no burthen to carry.

SONNET XXII.

HE COMPARES HIS FORMER HAPPINESS, UNSHACKLED BY THE CHAIN OF HIS ATTACHMENT, WITH HIS PRESENT UNHAPPY STATE OF SERVITUDE.

Alas, sweet liberty! in speeding hence,
Too well didst thou reveal unto my heart
Its careless joy, ere Love ensheathed his dart,
Of whose dread wound I ne'er can lose the sense.

My eyes enamored of their grief intense,
Did in that hour from Reason's bridle start,
Thus used to woe, they have no wish to part;
Each other mortal work is an offense.

No other theme will now my soul content
Than she who plants my death, with whose blest name
I make the air resound in echoes sweet:

Love spurs me to her as his only bent,
My hand can trace nought other but her fame,
No other spot attracts my willing feet.

---

9. *No other theme.* He finds it impossible to converse with any one who does not make Laura his theme.

SONNET XXIII.

HE CONTEMPLATES DEATH, TO DIVERT HIS MIND FROM THE BEWILDERMENT OF HIS ATTACHMENT.

Alas! I know death makes us all his prey,
Nor aught of mercy shows to destined Man;
How swift the world completes its circling span
And faithless Time soon speeds him on his way.

My heart repeats the blast of earth's last day,
Yet for its grief no recompense can scan,
Love holds me still beneath its cruel ban,
And still my eyes their usual tribute pay.

My watchful senses mark how on their wing
The circling years transport their fleeter kin,
And still I bow enslaved as by a spell:

For fourteen years did reason proudly fling
Defiance at my tameless will, to win
A triumph blest, if Man can good foretell.

SONNET XXIV.

ADDRESSED TO PANDOLPH MALATESTA, LORD OF RIMINI, ASSURING HIM THAT HIS NOBLE ACTIONS SHALL BECOME THE SUBJECT OF HIS SONG; THE RECORDS OF A POET BEING A MORE LASTING MEMORIAL THAN STATUES OF BRONZE.

Sweet virtue's blossom had its promise shed
Within thy breast, (when Love became thy foe;)
Fair as the flower, *now* its fruit doth glow,
And not by visions hath my hope been fed.

To hail thee thus, I by my heart am led,
That by my pen thy name renown should know,
No marble can the lasting fame bestow
Like that by poets' characters is spread.

Dost think Marcellus, or proud Cæsar's name,
Or Africanus, Paulus — still resound,
That sculptors proud have effigied their deed?

No, Pandolph, frail the statuary's fame,
For immortality alone is found
Within the records of a poet's meed.

---

4. *Not by visions.* Pandolph had fulfilled Petrarch's hopes of his character.

SONNET XXV.

HE RELATES TO HIS FRIEND SENNUCCIO HIS UNHAPPINESS, AND THE VARIED MOOD OF LAURA.

Alas, Sennuccio! would thy mind couldst frame
What now I suffer! what my life's drear reign!
Consumed beneath my heart's continued pain,
At will she guides me — yet am I the same.

Now humble — then doth pride her soul inflame,
Now harsh — then gentle — cruel — kind again —
Now all reserve — then borne on frolic's vein —
Disdain alternates with a milder claim.

Here once she sat, and there so sweetly sang;
Here turned to look on me, and ling'ring stood;
There first her beauteous eyes my spirit stole:

And here she smiled, and there her accents rarg,
Her speaking face here told another mood.
Thus Love our sovereign holds me in control.

---

4. *At will she guides me.* She causes him to experience every changing mood; while, notwithstanding her caprice, his sentiment for her is unaltered.

SONNET XXVI.

HE ENUMERATES THE THREE CAUSES OF HIS UNHAPPINESS.

Love, Fortune, and my ever faithful mind,
Which loathes the present in its memoried past,
So wound my spirit, that on all I cast
An envied thought who rest in darkness find.

My heart Love prostrates, Fortune more unkind
No comfort grants, until its sorrow vast
Impotent frets, then melts to tears at last:
Thus I to painful warfare am consigned.

My halcyon days I hope not to return,
But paint my future by a darker tint;
My spring is gone — my summer well-nigh fled:

Ah wretched me! too well do I discern
Each hope is now (unlike the diamond flint)
A fragile mirror, with its fragments shed.

SONNET XXVII.

HE PROPOSES MANY DOUBTS ON THE CAUSE OF HIS UNHAPPINESS, BUT CONCLUDES BY ACKNOWLEDGING IT TO BE HIS LOVE FOR LAURA.

Oh Love! if thou art not, what ails my heart!
But if create, — thy nature then reveal?
If fair, — with mortal pain why o'er me steal?
If ill, — so sweet a torment why impart?

What means my grief, if *I* have wooed thy dart?
If *thine* the wound — my tears it vain would heal:
Oh breathing death! yet ill I joy to feel!
Unsanctioned thus to rule, oh! whence thy art?

But if I own thy sway, my woe is shame.
Without a helm, upon a swelling sea,
I feel my fragile bark the wind's poor sport:

So light in wisdom's freight, laden with blame,
Each season wakes no sympathy in me,
While vainly do my wishes seek their port.

SONNET XXVIII.

HE DESCRIBES HIS FEELINGS, AWAKENED BY LAURA, UNDER FOUR SIMILITUDES.

For Love's envenomed shaft I stand the mark,
Like wax the fire dissolves, or summer's snow,
Like mists the zephyrs chase, whilst hoarse with woe,
To mercy's prayer thou dost refuse to hark!

Thine eyes emitted first the fatal spark
That waked the flame no change can undergo;
Lady! thou mockest, but to thee I owe
The emblematic semblance I remark.

My thoughts, Love's shaft—thy beauteous face, the sun—
My hopes, the fire — whilst thus completely armed
Love dazzles first, then wounds me e'en to death:

Thy tuneful voice, which me resistless won;
Thy words, the offspring of thy spirit, charmed;
The zephyrs these, which crush me with their breath.

SONNET XXIX.

HE DESCRIBES THE CONTRADICTORY STATE OF HIS FEELINGS, OWING TO HIS WEAKNESS, AND LAURA'S CAPRICE.

No peace I find; with causeless warfare fraught,
I hope, yet fear — as light with darkness strives,
I pierce Heaven's vail, yet earth's fond hope survives —
Love gives me all — and yet possess I naught.

In bonds, yet free — a captive, still unsought —
She scorns my chain, nor yet my thraldom rives,
Love frees me not, nor yet of life deprives,
Nor bids me live, nor quells my troubled thought.

With eyes, I yet am blind — though mute, complain —
I seek destruction, yet I cry for aid —
Myself despise, and yet another love:

Sorrow's my food, and yet I mock my pain,
Or life or death, I equally upbraid,
Thus then am I, and this for *thee* I prove.

---

3. *I pierce, &c.*—His spirit strives to contemplate his Maker alone, while earthly wishes enchain it to earth.

4. *Love gives me all.*—He possesses the world, in the love of the most virtuous and beautiful woman of the age — and yet she is to him but a vision.

12. *Sorrow's my food.*—He weeps — yet smiles that her love is the cause of his weeping.

SONNET XXX.

HE PROCLAIMS HIS UNALTERABLE ATTACHMENT TO LAURA.

Oh! were my home 'mid flowers the sun doth blast,
Within his chariot's course less fiercely bright,
Or where eternal snows forbid his light,
Where first he seems to wake, or rests at last:

In poverty or wealth, let me be cast,
Breathing Heaven's breath, or withering 'neath its blight —
'Mid realms of ceaseless day, or hopeless night,
In life's sweet dawn, or when bright youth is past.

In heaven, on earth, in darkness let me dwell,
Upon the hill's proud top, or tearful vale,
A spirit freed, or chained within earth's shrine:

Let me be nameless, or the world excel,
Unchanged shall be the record of my tale —
Unchanged the sighs three lustrums have been mine.

SONNET XXXI.

HE CELEBRATES LAURA'S BEAUTY AND VIRTUE, AND LAMENTS THAT HE CANNOT SING HER FAME TO ALL THE WORLD, AS HE HAS THROUGHOUT ITALY.

Bright spirit! that my constant muse doth wake,
Adorned by virtue's gentlest, warmest grace;
Earth's sun! of purity, the dwelling place,
A tower by Heaven sustained, which naught can shake.

Heaven's flame, awaking roses on a flake
Of living snow, my model thee I trace;
And when my soul expands to view thy face
Of earth's the brightest, thou its joy doth make!

Could distant regions comprehend my rhyme,
Olympus, and the Pillar of the South,
Had rung thy name, and north, and east, and west;

But since to heaven's four points it may not climb,
That beauteous land shall wake it from my mouth,
Where hills divide, and sea and Alps invest.

---

5. *Heaven's flame.* Virtue is a flame which wreathes to heaven. Roses are the creation of that flame which, scattered on a bed of snow, breaks the uniformity of the prospect. Snow stands here for the ice of virtue.

SONNET XXXII.

THE POET HOLDS A DISCOURSE WITH HIS HEART, IN WHICH HE DOUBTS A HAPPY TERMINATION TO HIS ATTACHMENT, AS LAURA DOES NOT REVEAL HER OWN; BUT HE CONCLUDES HIS SENTIMENT IS RETURNED.

P. What act, what dream, absorbs thee, oh my soul?
Say, must we peace, a truce, or warfare hail?
H. Our fate I know not; but her eyes unveil
The grief our woe doth in her heart enrole.

P. But that is vain, since by her eyes' control
With nature I no sympathy inhale.
H. Yet guiltless she, for Love doth there prevail.
P. No balm to me, since she will not condole.

H. When Man is mute, how oft the spirit grieves,
In clamorous woe! how oft the sparkling eye
Belies the inward tear, where none can gaze!

P. Yet restless still, the grief the mind conceives
Is not dispelled, but stagnant seems to lie.
The wretched hope not, though *hope* aid might raise.

SONNET XXXIII.

HE CELEBRATES LAURA'S UNPARALLELED BEAUTY AND VIRTUE.

The stars, the elements, and Heaven above,
Each other rivalled to awake a light,
Where Nature stands reflected with delight,
Nor Phœbus elsewhere views such mirrored love:

The breathing wonder doth so nobly move,
That mortals dare not fix on it their sight;
Love, sweetness, grace, within those eyes unite
In gentle streams, and there exhaustless prove.

Their gentle rays so purify the air,
It kindles into virtue, and returns
A breath that man can ne'er conceive nor tell:

No other flame is ever nourished there
Save that with honor and with virtue burns.
Oh! when did beauty earthly hope dispel?

SONNET XXXIV.

HE DESCRIBES HIS FEELINGS, BEHOLDING LAURA ONE DAY IN TEARS FOR THE LOSS OF A NEAR FRIEND.

My mortal eye hath viewed an angel's grace,
Enshrined within a form unmatched on earth;
A dream — a shadow, seems each other worth,
As I with tearful bliss its memory trace:

I marked grief's tide those beauteous eyes deface,
Which to the sun had envy given birth;
I heard those accents, in whose absent mirth
The hills might dance, and floods their rapids brace.

Love, wisdom, sympathy, and sorrow wept,
And thus awoke a harmony more blest
Than ever yet had sprung from mortal lyre;

Heaven listened to the sound, and silence kept,
While every trembling leaf was soothed to rest,
So sweet a joy did earth and air respire!

SONNET XXXV.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT AS THE LAST.

That ever-honored, yet too bitter day,
Her image hath so graven in my breast,
That only memory can return it drest
In living charms, no genius could portray :

Her air such graceful sadness did display,
Her plaintive, soft laments my ear so blest,
I asked if mortal, or a heavenly guest,
Did thus the threatening clouds in smiles array.

Her locks were gold, her cheeks were breathing snow,
Her brows with ebon arched — bright stars her eyes,
Wherein Love nestled, thence his dart to aim :

Her teeth were pearls — the rose's softest glow [sighs ;
Dwelt on that mouth, whence woke to speech grief's
Her tears were crystal — and her breath was flame.

SONNET XXXVI.

IN PRAISE OF LAURA'S BEAUTY AND HER MENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

From whence in Heaven—oh! from what regions bright,
Hath nature gained the model of that thought?
Which thus embodying, she to man hath taught,
(By earth's sweet grace) her power 'mid realms of light.

Such golden locks, nor Dryad, Naiad bright,
E'er rivalled, when by sportive Zephyrs caught;
What mind with so much beauty yet was fraught?
Its rarest gem hath winged my life's sad flight.

He hath not on celestial beauty dwelt,
In rapturous gaze, who ne'er hath seen her eyes
Within their liquid orbs so sweetly move:

That heart which ne'er her sunny smile hath felt,
Nor heard the music of her words and sighs,
Knows not its wound, nor yet the balm of love!

SONNET XXXVII.

HE ESTEEMS EVERYTHING HAPPY THAT SURROUNDS LAURA'S HABITATION.

Bright happy flowers! and herb so bounteous fed,
O'er which my Laura's modelled foot hath stept:
Ye meads! that have her words' sweet music kept,
Nor yet restored the impress of her tread:

Unfettered shrubs! ye leaves so freshly shed!
Pale violets! where Love hath fondly crept;
Ye woods? whose shade doth Phœbus intercept,
And in his stolen beams so proudly spread!

Sweet landscape! stream! that doth so purely roam,
From laving oft her beauteous face and eyes,
Thou wanderest clear in their reflected light:

I envy ye, so near her modest home!
No rock among ye habit's law defies,
But owns alike the flame *my* soul doth blight.

---

11. *Thou wanderest, &c.* In apostrophizing the river, Petrarch declares it had gained its limped clearness from the brilliancy of Laura's eyes, she having sometimes bathed them in its waters.

13. *Habit's law.* He makes inanimate objects obedient to the law of habit, and from their constant vicinity to Laura they have become sensible of her presence.

SONNET XXXVIII.

BY THE SIMILE OF A VESSEL, HE DESCRIBES THE TURBULENT WEAKNESS OF HIS MIND, OWING TO LAURA'S DISDAIN.

In winter's midnight, where the billows grow
In wrath 'twixt Scylla and Charybdis drear,
With dark oblivion's freight my bark I steer,
While at the helm I feel my spirit's foe:

One thought of shame accosts me as I go,
Which seems to mock the tempest's wakening fear,
My sail is shivered, while with anguished tear,
Vain hopes and wishes, still the blast doth blow.

Grief's ceaseless tide, and clouds with wrath opprest,
Relax the cordage — half exhausted now
With ignorance and error intertwined:

Those stars are vailed which once my spirit blest,
Its skill and reason to the tempest bow,
While now its port to gain, hope hath declined.

---

3. *Dark oblivion.* The oblivion of virtue.
4. *Spirit foe.* Love.
12. *Those stars, &c.* Laura's eyes. It seems, at this period, that Laura would not see him.

SONNET XXXIX.

HE PRAISES LAURA'S GRACEFUL BEARING, HAVING SEEN HER PASS ALONG THE SHORES ON SORGA.

Love! let us pause in contemplation blest
Of her our glory — Nature's freshest child!
How sweetness pours on *her* its essence mild,
For *her* heaven's light becomes an earthly guest.

With that, its brightest glow, art doth invest
Her mortal shrine; (what other so beguiled?)
How soft her glance upon her dwelling mild,
Its gentle slopes how light her foot hath prest.

The smiling herb, — the many-tinted flower,
Which round the frowning holm in clusters lie,
There woo her touch, and court her fairy tread:

The heaven's illumined by the wakening power
Her glowing cheek emits, in that bright eye
Exulting feel the rest its glances shed.

SONNET XL.

HE DETAILS THE SATISFACTION HE DERIVES FROM SEEING LAURA, AND LISTENING TO HER CONVERSATION.

Such noble aliment sustains my soul,
That Jove I envy not his god-like food ;
I gaze on her — and feel each other good
Engulphed in that blest draught at Lethe's bowl :

Her every word I in my heart enroll,
That on its grief it still may constant brood ;
Prostrate by Love — my doom not understood
From that one form, I feel a twin control.

My spirit drinks the music of her voice,
Whose speaking harmony (to Heaven so dear)
They only feel who in its tone partake :

Again within her face my eyes rejoice,
For in its gentle lineaments appear
What genius, nature, art, and Heaven can wake.

---

8. *Twin control.* He feels a double enjoyment in Laura's society, that of beholding and listening to her.

SONNET XLI.

HE RETURNS TO PROVENCE AFTER A SHORT ABSENCE, AND EXPRESSES HIS CONSCIOUSNESS OF BEING IN THE VICINITY OF LAURA BY THE PURITY OF THE ATMOSPHERE HE INHALES.

My laureled air, that wakes the hills to mirth,
And clothes her bower in its gayest bloom,
Again I breathe within *that* soul's perfume,
Who to my grief and fame hath given birth :

I fly my Tuscan clime — my native earth —
To find repose for my sad troubled doom ;
My thoughts to brighten 'mid their aching gloom,
I seek my sun, and pant to feel its worth.

That sun awakes such varying delight,
That Love constrains me to return again,
Where then my dazzled sight compels my stay :

I ask not arms, but wings, to aid my flight ;
But by *that* light doth Heaven my death ordain,
Which blasts me near, and wounds me when away.

---

1. *Laurel'd air.* The enamored poet delights to play upon the name of his mistress.

SONNET XLII.

HE CONJURES HIS SOUL TO TURN ITS CONTEMPLATION TO HEAVEN, IN IMITATION OF LAURA'S BRIGHT EXAMPLE.

My soul! that doth such changing thoughts afford,
Doth hear, read, write, and speak their varied tone!
My wandering eye — and thou the sense alone
That bearest to the heart each sacred word!

Oh! would ye not your erring life's record
An earlier or a later date had known?
Those eyes o'er ye had not their luster thrown,
Nor ye had traced her footsteps on the sward?

But since that modeled brightness points the way,
No wanderings now, must stay your brief career,
Whose recompense may be a home divine:

To win thy heaven my failing hope essay,
And through the mist which vails her from thee here,
Her virtue track, and in her brightness shine!

---

3. *The sense alone.* The hearing.

SONNET XLIII.

THE POET CONSOLES HIMSELF FOR THE UNHAPPINESS OF HIS ATTACHMENT, BY THE HOPE THAT HIS VERSES ON LAURA MAY PROCURE HIM IMMORTALITY.

Sweet wrath, sweet anger, and thou too sweet peace,
Sweet ill, sweet sorrow, and its burthen sweet;
Sweet speech, as sweetly felt, and now replete
With balmy zephyrs, now to flames increase:

Mourn not, my heart, let thy complainings cease,
And in the honor of thy worship cheat
Thy grief for her, to whom thou didst repeat:
" 'Tis thou alone who canst my heart release."

Another age, another race will know,
Who with the sigh of envy may exclaim:
" He suffered much for that most noble love:

While others cry: "Oh Fate! my eyes' dark foe!
To view such brightness; why did I not claim
An earlier breath, or *she* a later prove?"

---

4. *With balmy zephyrs.* Laura's conversation falls like a refreshing breeze upon his heart, when he is himself too ardent; and it breaths a gentle flame, when she feels that he is lukewarm in the cause of virtue.

SONNET XLIV.

SAILING DOWN THE RHONE, UPON HIS RETURN TO AVIGNON, PETRARCH BIDS THE RIVER KISS HIS LAURA'S HAND, AS IT WILL ARRIVE AT HER DWELLING BEFORE HIM.

Oh rapid flood! which from thy mountain bed
Gnawest thy shores, whence (in my tongue) thy name;
Thou art my partner, night or day the same,
Where *I* by *love, thou* art by *nature* led:

Precede me now; no weariness doth shed
Its spell o'er *thee*, no sleep *thy* course can tame;
Yet ere the parent stream thy tribute claim,
Pause, where the herb and air seem brighter fed.

There beams our gentle star, whose living fire
Illumes thy shore, which bounds her native home:
Oh! could I dream my absence dimmed its light!

Say (when to kiss her feet thou dost aspire)
"It speaks *his* message, who but *seems* to roam,
His mortal powers retard his spirit's flight."

---

2. *Gnawest*—In the original, *Rodendo*. The Abbe de Sade says, that "Petrarch makes a bad etymology of the Latin name *Rhodanus*—Rhone." Gnawing the shore (*rodendo*,) however, seems an apt illustration of the creeping motion of the river, and not altogether an unpoetical etymology of the *Italian* name *Rodano*—Rhone.

13. *His message.* Petrarch is speaking of himself.

SONNET XLV.

HE RETURNS TO ITALY, BUT DECLARES HIS SPIRIT REMAINS AT VAL' CHIUSA WITH HIS LAURA.

Those gentle hills which hold my spirit still,
(For though *I* fly, my *heart* there must remain)
Are e'er before me, while my burthen's pain,
By love bestowed, I bear with patient will.

I marvel oft that I can yet fulfill
That yoke's sweet duties, which my soul enchain;
I seek release, but find the effort vain;
The more I fly, the nearer seems my ill.

So, like the stag, who, wounded by the dart,
Its poisoned iron rankling in his side,
Flies swifter at each quickening anguished throb,—

I feel the fatal arrow at my heart;
Yet with its poison, joy awakes its tide;
My flight exhausts me — grief my life doth rob!

---

1. *Those gentle hills.* The hills upon which Avignon is situated.

SONNET XLVI.

HE DETAILS THE REASONS OF LAURA'S EMPIRE OVER HIM, AND SPECIFIES THE YEAR AND DAY FROM WHICH HE DATES HIS ATTACHMENT.

By will impelled, love o'er my path presides;
By pleasure led, o'ercome by habit's reign,
Sweet hope deludes, and comforts me again;
At her bright touch, my heart's despair subsides:

It takes her proffered hand, and there confides.
To doubt its blind disloyal guide were vain;
Each sense usurps poor reason's broken rein;
On each desire, another wilder rides!

Grace, virtue, honor, beauty, words so dear,
Have twined me with that laureled bough, whose power
My heart hath tangled in its lab'rinth sweet:

The thirteen hundred twenty-seventh year,
The sixth of April's suns — in that first hour
My entrance marked, *whence* I see no retreat.

---

6. *Blind disloyal, &c.* Hope, the poet represents, is blind, because she seldom gives us the aid we wish. She is disloyal, because often faithless.

10. *Laurel branch.* Petrarch, as usual, refers to the name of Laura.

SONNET XLVII.

THE POET COMMENCES BY PROCLAIMING LAURA'S GENERAL SUPERIORITY: HE THEN SPECIFIES THE GRACES BY WHOSE UNION HE HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO HIS PRESENT SUBDUED SITUATION.

With grace heaven grants to few with liberal hand,
With virtue rare, unlike an earthly dower;
Her golden locks conceal her mind's blest power;
In earth's meek child, celestial charms expand.

With form that scarce bespeaks a mortal brand,
Her song is felt within the spirit's bower:
She moves an angel; pride and harshness cower
Beneath that soul's bright glance — so pure, so bland.

Her eyes awake the heart's gay varied tint;
Can smile to day, the gloom of hopeless night;—
They steal the soul, to breathe it back again.

Her speech, whose imaged flowers bear heaven's imprint;
Her sighs recalled, as on the ear they light;
And these the magic which my powers enchain!

SONNET XLVIII.

IN PRAISE OF LAURA.

Though nobly born, so humbly, calm, she dwells,
So bright her intellect — so pure her mind —
The blossom and its bloom in her we find ;
With pensive look, her heart with mirth rebels :

Thus by her planets' union she excels,
(Nay — *His*, the stars' proud sovereign, who enshrined
There honor, worth, and fortitude combined !)
Which to the bard inspired, his hope dispels.

Love blooms in her, but 'tis his home most pure ;
Her daily virtues blend with native grace ;
Her noiseless movements speak, though she is mute :

Such power her eyes, they can the day obscure,
Illume the night, — the honey's sweetness chase,
And wake its stream, where gall doth oft pollute.

SONNET. XLIX.

UPON THE SAME SUBJECT AS THE LAST.

Oh ! what rich vein to love the gold bequeathed
Which wrought those tresses ? Say, what thorn so blest
Resigned to him its rose ? what mount possest
That tender snow, he now to life hath breathed ?

Whence sprang the pearls from whose restraint un-
Her words in weaponed eloquence are drest? [sheathed
Where woke that beauty, on her brow confest,
Serener than the smile o'er Heaven enwreathed.

What spheres harmonious that sweet song inspired,
Whose melody so vanquishes my soul
No further triumph can it now contest ?

What wakening sun those eyes exalted fired
What light so pure — they war and peace control,
And heat and cold alternate in my breast ?

SONNET L.

THE POET EXPRESSES HIS UNHAPPINESS AT FINDING HE HAS DISPLEASED LAURA: HE DECLARES HIMSELF WEARIED BY ALL THAT FORMERLY GAVE HIM DELIGHT.

Thou little chambered haven to the woes
Whose daily tempest overwhelms my soul!
From shame, I in Heaven's light my grief control;
Thou art its fountain, which each night o'erflows.

My couch! that oft hath wooed me to repose,
'Mid sorrows vast — Love's ivoried hand hath stole
Grief's turgid stream, which o'er thee it doth roll,
That hand which good on all but *me* bestows.

Not only quiet and sweet rest I fly,
But from myself and thought, whose vain pursuit
On pinioned fancy doth my soul transport:

The multitude I did so long defy,
Now as my hope and refuge I salute,
So much I tremble solitude to court.

---

1. *Little chambered haven.* Petrarch addresses the apartment he used to occupy in the house of his friend Lelio whenever he visited Avignon, from his retreat at Val Chiusa.
8. *That hand.* Laura.

SONNET LI.

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF CHARLES OF LUXEMBURG'S VISIT TO AVIGNON, WHERE, AT AN ENTERTAINMENT GIVEN TO THAT PRINCE, HE DISTINGUISHES LAURA FROM THE BRILLIANT FEMALE ASSEMBLY, AND SALUTES HER ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH CUSTOM.

A sovereign nature, — an exalted mind, —
A soul proud — sleepless — with a lynx's eye, —
An instant foresight, — thought as towering high,
E'en as the heart in which they are enshrined :

A bright assembly on that day combined
Each other in his honor to outvie,
When 'mid the fair his judgment did descry
That sweet perfection all to her resigned.

Unmindful of her rival sisterhood,
He motioned silently his preference,
And fondly welcomed *her*, that humblest one :

So pure a kiss he gave, that all who stood,
Though fair, rejoiced in beauty's recompense :
By that strange act *my* heart was quite undone !

---

14. *By that strange act.* Though Petrach applauds the distinction with which the prince honored his mistress, he does not seem to approve the method of his displaying his admiration. It is to be remembered that that kind of salutation was not the custom in Tuscany, as it was in France, of evincing courtesy to ladies in public.

SONNET LII.

HE CELEBRATES LAURA'S EYES, INVITING ALL WHO DESIRE TO OBTAIN A REPUTATION FOR THE MOST EXALTED VIRTUES, TO BEHOLD THEIR REFLECTION IN THEIR MIRROR (HER EYES.)

She, who to gain a glorious fame aspires,
For courage, fortitude, and wisdom's prize,
Must seek her model in my foe's bright eyes,
Who as *my* sovereign public breath attires:

To heaven and honor win, their light inspires,
Tells grace and virtue to assume one guise,
They point the road to those ethereal skies,
Who wait her spirit's flight with such desire.

They speak a language words would vainly find;
Their silent eloquence — expression blest —
No characters of mortal skill could paint:

Proud beauty's lesson, dazzling oft the mind,
Not there is learned; their brightness is possest
From Nature's gift, not waked by art's constraint.

SONNET LIII.

HE CELEBRATES LAURA UNDER HIS USUALLY ADOPTED SIMILE OF THE LAUREL, LAUDING THE RARE COMBINATION OF BEAUTY AND VIRTUE HIS MISTRESS PRESENTS IN HERSELF.

Blest laurel! fadeless and triumphant tree!
Of kings and poets thou the fondest pride!
How much of joy and sorrow's changing tide
In my short breath hath been awaked by thee!

Lady, the will's sweet sovereign! thou canst see
No bliss but virtue, where thou dost preside;
Love's chain, his snare, thou dost alike deride;
From man's deceit thy wisdom sets thee free.

Birth's native pride, and treasure's precions store,
(Whose bright possession we so fondly hail)
To thee as burthens valueless appear:

Thy beauty's excellence — (none viewed before)
Thy soul had wearied — but thou lovest the vail,
That shrine of purity adorneth here.

SECOND PART.

SONNETS COMPOSED AFTER LAURA'S DEATH.

SONNET LIV.

THE POET BEWAILS HIS LAURA'S DEATH.

[This sonnet appears to have been written in the first impulse of bereaved affection, and, with the following sonnets, seems the offspring of the heart rather than of the imagination.]

Alas! that touching glance, that beauteous face!
Alas! that dignity with sweetness fraught!
Alas! that speech which tamed the wildest thought!
That roused the coward, glory to embrace!

Alas! that smile which *in* me did encase
That fatal dart, whence *here* I hope for nought—
Oh! hadst thou earlier our regions sought,
The world had then confessed thy sovereign grace!

In thee I breathed, life's flame was nursed by thee,
For I was thine; and since of thee bereaved,
Each other woe hath lost its venomed sting:

My soul's blest joy! when last thy voice on me
In music fell, my heart sweet hope conceived;
Alas! thy words have sped on zephyrs' wings!

---

12. *When last, &c.* He alludes to his visit to Laura the year before her death, when, about to quit Avignon to settle sometime in Italy, she displayed more feeling at their separation than she had ever before evinced. Petrarch was at Parma when Laura died.

SONNET LV.

HE BEWAILS THE DEATH OF LAURA, AND THAT OF CARDINAL COLONNA, WHICH HAPPENED ABOUT THE SAME PERIOD, AND REJECTS EVERY CONSOLATION.

My laureled hope! and thou Colonna proud!
Your broken strength can shelter me no more!
Nor Boreas, Auster, Indus, Afric's shore,
Can give me *that*, whose loss my soul hath bowed:

My step exulting, and my joy avowed, [store;
Death now hath quenched with ye, my heart's twin
Nor earth's high rule, nor gems, nor gold's bright ore,
Can e'er bring back what once my heart endowed.

But if this grief my destiny hath willed,
What else can I oppose but tearful eyes,
A sorrowing bosom, and a spirit quelled?

Oh life! whose vista seems so brightly filled,
A sunny breath, and *that* exhaling, dies
The hope, oft, many watchful years have swelled.

SONNET LVI.

HE RECALLS THE ANXIETY OF HIS PAST EXISTENCE, AND NOW, DEPRIVED OF HIS EVERY JOY, HE DECLARES HIMSELF HOPELESS AND WRETCHED.

Life hurries on, unmindful of repose,
And death pursues, with rapid sleepless dart;
While now in warfare round my aching heart,
The past, the present, and the future close:

Now sad remembrance — expectation's throes —
Their varied wounds alternately impart,
That from my soul dared I her *hope* to part,
Myself had quelled existence, and its woes.

If e'er my heart one blissful transport knew,
Memory recalls the thrill, but soon I wake
To mark my troubled bark amid the gale:

My spirit sinks, e'en though the port I view:
I hear the crashing mast, the cables break,
While now, no twin-starred oracle I hail!

---

12. *E'en though the port, &c.* Though he beholds the harbor (the close of existence,) this world's tempests still agitate him.
14. *Twin-starred oracle.* Laura's eyes.

SONNET LVII.

HE REPROVES HIS SOUL FOR RECALLING THE IMAGE OF LAURA AS SHE WAS IN EXISTENCE, AS IT CAN BUT FEED THE MEMORY OF HIS AFFECTION: HE CONSOLES AND ENCOURAGES IT TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF HEAVEN.

What act, what thought, impels thee, oh my soul!
That thou wilt cling in fondness to the hour
Whose joys now wake alone through memory's power?
Why fan the flame which long hath o'er thee stole?

Those words, those looks, whose soft harmonious whole
To singly trace hath been thy blissful dower,
'Twere vain to seek within their earthly bower,
Since heaven's blest tablets, now their charms enroll.

Alas! that thought suppress, whose fatal spell
Must crush us in its vain — its phantom chain;
But yet another wake whose home is joy!

Yes, seek above the bliss that earth doth quell,
For e'en in death, as in her living reign,
That beauty must each hope of peace destroy.

SONNET LVIII.

HE ENDEAVORS TO FIND CONSOLATION FOR HIS BEREAVEMENT, IN THE REFLECTION THAT LAURA HAS ASCENDED TO HEAVEN, AND IS THERE ENJOYING PERFECT HAPPINESS.

Mine eyes! our glorious sun is vailed in night,
Or set to us, to rise mid realms of love;
There we may hail it still, and haply prove
It mourned, that we delayed our heavenward flight.

Mine ears! the music of her tones delight
Those, who its harmony can best approve;
My feet! who in her track so joyed to move,
Ye cannot penetrate her regions bright!

But wherefore should your wrath on me descend?
No spell of mine hath hushed for ye the joy
Of seeing, hearing, feeling, she was near:

Go, war with death — yet, rather let us bend
To Him who can create — who can destroy —
And bids the ready smile succeed the tear.

---

1. *Our glorious sun.* Our, refers to eyes; sun, to Laura.
6. *Those, who its harmony, &c.* The spirits in heaven comprehend her language better than mortals.

SONNET LIX.

LAURA HAS REPROVED HIM IN A VISION, FOR CONTINUING HIS MOURNFUL SONG: SHE TELLS HIM THAT HE OUGHT NOT TO GRIEVE. AS SHE IS NOT DEAD, BUT ALIVE IN HEAVEN.

Where sorrowing birds awake the sad lament,
And waving trees obey the summer's breeze,
Where from the verdant shore the streamlet flees
In hollow murmurs at its fury spent,

I sit — and give love's sweet illusions vent;
While *she*, earth now hath vailed at heaven's decrees,
Awakes in each her voice: my spirit sees
Her bliss, and feels her sighs responsive sent.

"Alas!" she pitying whispers, "why consume
Thy life's sweet age? why suffer thus to flow
The tide of useless sorrow from thine eye?

Weep not for me — I grieve not in the tomb,
For when I slept to all that mortals know
I waked to bloom in heaven's eternal sky!"

---

5. *Give love's sweet illusions vent.* He says he hears Laura's voice in the song of the birds, in the whistling of the air through the trees, and in the murmuring of the river.

SONNET LX.

HE GRIEVES THAT DEATH HAS QUENCHED THE LIGHT OF BEAUTY: HIS ONLY CONSOLATION IS NOW TO BEHOLD LAURA IN HIS DREAMS, OR IN THE HUES OF IMAGINATION.

Death! thou hast blanched (of earth's) the brightest face,
And quenched the living luster of those eyes;
That spirit, decked with virtues richest prize,
Thou from its shrine hath freed, of purest grace.

My every hope thou instant dost erase,
Hath stilled the sweetest accents 'neath the skies;
Each sound, each other object I despise,
While naught but sad complaint my soul can trace.

My Laura! well to soothe me in my woe,
Thy pitying form returns in visioned dress;
Alas! I now no other joy can prove!

But could *I* speak thy words — to others show
How bright appears thy shadowed loveliness,
Not man alone, but brutes would share my love!

---

12. *Could I speak thy words.* Petrarch is always unable to repeat to others what Laura says to him in her vision, or to describe her beautiful appearance.

SONNET LXI.

BY A BEAUTIFUL SIMILE HE DETAILS HOW LAURA HAS APPEARED TO HIM, COUNSELLING HIM TO SHUN EVIL, AND TO PURSUE THE PATH OF VIRTUE, EXALTING HIS MIND TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF HEAVEN.

Oh! ne'er did mother to a cherish'd son,
Or tender wife to her loved bosom's mate
Breathe half thy anxious counsel (when stern fate
Awakes the perils they too soon must run :)

Such thou dost speak, when from thy heaven won,
Thou lookest down with love of earthly date,
Mourning my exile from thy holy gate,
Thine eye twin-kindled by sweet pity's sun.

Each love most hallowed doth itself reveal
Amid thy tender fears, while in thy voice
I feel a Mentor in my pilgrimage :

Numbering life's snares, I hear thy soft appeal,
That heaven should claim my spirit's lingering choice;
Thy tones wake peace, then war no more doth wage.

---

8. *Twin-kindled.* She looks upon him with a double feeling of compassion; it speaks the sympathy of a parent and a wife.

SONNET LXII.

HE RECALLS LAURA'S RIGID VIRTUE, AND NOW REVERES THE MEMORY OF HER COLD RESERVE, WHICH DURING HER LIFE USED SO TO DISPLEASE HIM.

Alas ! this changing world ! my present joy
Was once my grief's dark source, and now I feel
My sufferings passed were but my soul to heal
Its fearful warfare — peace's soft decoy.

Poor human wishes ! Hope, thou fragile toy
To lovers oft ! my woe had met its seal,
Had *she* but hearkened to my love's appeal,
Who throned in heaven, hath fled this world's alloy.

My blinded love, and yet more stubborn mind,
Resistless urged me to my bosom's shame,
And where my soul's destruction I had met :

But blessed *she* who bade life's current find
A holier course, who stilled my spirit's flame
With gentle hope *that* soul might triumph yet.

SONNET LXIII.

IT IS ONLY FROM THE LAST TERZINA THAT WE GATHER THE ARGUMENT OF THIS SONNET: THE POET ANNOUNCES THE CONCLUSION OF HIS SONG, SINCE SHE IS DEAD WHOSE OFT SUNG BEAUTY HAD INSPIRED IT.

Those eyes which oft have waked my ardent song;
Those arms, those hands, those feet, that face divine
Which made my heart its other self resign,
Myself a marvel dwell amid the throng:

Those locks whose radiance did the sunbeams wrong,
That smile with angel's luster seemed to shine,
These to my heart its Eden did assign,
But now, their essence gone, to dust belong.

And yet I live — for this I only grieve;
A helpless bark upon a sea of dread
I ride, without my cherished beacon's glow:

My strain is o'er — no more its love I weave —
The spring is parched that once its genius fed;
My tuneless lyre returns no chord but woe.

SONNET LXIV.

AFTER LAURA'S DEATH THE FAME OF PETRARCH'S SONNETS INCREASED: AND, PERCEIVING HOW MUCH HE WAS ESTIMATED, THE POET LAMENTS HE HAD NOT BESTOWED MORE PAINS UPON THEIR COMPOSITION, A LAMENT WHICH HE SEEMS AFTERWARD TO HAVE RETRACTED.

Oh! had I deemed my sighs, in numbers rung,
Could e'er have gained the world's approving smile,
I had awoke my rhymes in choicer style,
My sorrow's birth more tunefully had sung:

But she is gone whose inspiration hung
On all my words, and did my thoughts beguile;
My numbers harsh seemed melody awhile,
Now *she* is mute who o'er them music flung.

Nor fame, nor other incense, *then* I sought,
But how to quell my heart's o'erwhelming grief,
I wept, but sought no honor in my tear:

But could the world's fair suffrage now be bought,
'Twere joy to gain, but that my hour is brief,
Her lofty spirit waves me to her bier.

---

4. *My sorrow's birth.* From the commencement of his song of Laura.

SONNET LXV.

HE REMAINS THE SPORT OF GRIEF ALONE, SINCE THE DEATH OF HIS MISTRESS.

'Mid life's bright glow she dwelt within my soul,
The sovereign tenant of an humble cell,
But when for heaven she bade the world farewell,
Death seemed to grasp me in his fierce control:

My withered *love* torn from its brightening goal—
My *soul* without its treasure doomed to dwell—
Could I but trace *their* grief, *their* sorrow tell,
A stone might wake, and fain with them condole.

They inly mourn, where none can hear their woe
Save I alone, who too with grief opprest,
Can only soothe my anguish by my sighs:

Life is indeed a shadowy dream below;
Our blind desires by Reason's chain unblest,
While Hope in treacherous withered fragments lies.

---

7. By *they* and *them*, Petrirch refers to love and his heart, which he continues in the succeeding lines.

SONNET LXVI.

HIS BREATHING LAURA UNITED BEAUTY AND VIRTUE IN ONE SHRINE; WHEN SHE DIED, VIRTUE FLED TO HEAVEN, AND BEAUTY SOUGHT ITS PARENT, EARTH.

Within one mortal shrine two foes had met;
(Beauty and virtue) yet they dwelt so bright,
That ne'er within the soul did they excite
Rebellious thoughts — their union might beget:

But, parted to fulfil great nature's debt,
One blooms in heaven, exulting in its hight,
Its twin on earth doth rest, from whose vailed night
No more those eyes of love, man's soul can fret.

That speech by heaven inspired, so humbly wise —
That graceful air, — her look so winning, meek,
That woke and kindles still my bosom's pain :

They all have fled ; but if to gain her skies
I tardy seem, my weary pen would seek
For her blest name a consecrated reign !

SONNET LXVII.

HE CONTRASTS HIS PRESENT MISERY WITH THE HAPPINESS OF HIS PAST EXISTENCE, NOW FOR EVER CRUSHED BY LAURA'S DEATH.

When Memory turns to gaze on Time gone by,
(Which in its flight hath armed e'en Thought with
And to my troubled rest a period brings, [wings,)
Quells too the flame which long could ice defy:

And when I mark Love's promise withered lie,
That treasure parted which my bosom wrings,
(For *she* in heaven, her *shrine* to nature clings)
While thus my toils' reward, she both deny.

I then awake, and feel bereaved indeed!
The darkest fate on earth seems bliss to mine —
So much I fear myself, and dread its woe!

Oh Fortune! death! oh star! oh fate decreed!
Oh bitter day! that yet must sweetly shine,
Alas! too surely thou hast laid me low!

SONNET LXVIII.

HE DEMANDS WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE GRACES WHICH USED TO DELIGHT HIM, AND DECLARES HE CAN NEVER CEASE TO MOURN THEIR LOSS.

Where now that brow, whose slightest, gentlest sign,
My watchful heart delighted to obey?
Where now those beauteous eyes, whose starry ray
My path illumined by a light divine?

Her courage, and her wit, that used to shine
In language virtuous, sweet, without display,
Earth's mingled graces hers, yet where are they
Whose charm so long my reason did confine?

Where now that face, whose earthly beauty gave
Repose and freshness to my wearied soul,
And bore the impress of my every thought?

Where now is she who did my heart enslave?
Alas, poor world! mine eyes with thee condole,
Together we must dwell with anguish fraught!

SONNET LXIX.

HE ENVIES HEAVEN FOR POSSESSING LAURA'S SPIRIT, AND AGAIN EARTH FOR RETAINING HER INANIMATE BODY, AND DESIRES DEATH THAT HE MAY REJOIN HER.

Repacious earth ! I envy thee the prize
Thyself hast won, and, hidden from my sight ;
Thou hast enclosed that face, whose shadowy light
Woke peace amid the warfare of my sighs :

And thou, oh Heaven ! (in whose high bosom lies
Her spirit freed from this, its dwelling bright),
I envy thee, for thou dost hail its flight,
Thou, who to few dost ope thy hallowed skies.

Blest spirits ! ye I envy for the joy
That I on earth most panted to obtain,
Sweet fellowship with her in converse blest :

And death ! I envy thee ; thou didst destroy
My life in hers ; dost on those sweet orbs reign,
Yet willest not that *I* should share her rest.

SONNET LXX.

WRITTEN ON THE POET'S RETURN TO VAL' CHIUSA AFTER LAURA'S DEATH: HE FEEDS HIS GRIEF BY CONTEMPLATING EVERY FEATURE OF THE LANDSCAPE IN WHOSE NEIGHBORHOOD SHE HAD LIVED AND DIED.

Sweet vale! that echoest my lone complaint;
Bright flood! augmented by my mingling tear;
Ye tameless beasts! and songsters wandering here!
Ye fish! that own these verdant shores' restraint:

And thou, soft air! my sighs too warmly taint;
Gay path! that now so lonely doth appear;
Calm smiling mount, yet seeming now so drear,
Love leads me back to ye with sweet constraint.

I mark your every feature still the same,
While I, alas! myself no longer trace;
Joy's early shrine is changed to that of woe:

From hence my love I viewed, and now I came
To trace from whence she fled to heaven's blest space,
And left her beauteous mortal shrine below!

---

1. *Sweet vale.* Val' Chiusa.

2. *Bright flood.* Sorga.

10. *While.* Petrarch says he no longer recognizes in himself the same person who once used to sympathize with the beauty of the landscape.

SONNET LXXI.

HE RELATES A VISION, IN WHICH HE ASSUMES TO HAVE DISCOVERED HIS MISTRESS IN THE PLANET VENUS, AND FROM WHOM HE DERIVES THE GREATEST CONSOLATION.

My wandering fancy took a heavenward flight,
For her who I on earth have sought in vain,
I found her mid the souls in heaven's third reign,
Her mien less haughty, and her form more bright:

She touched my hand, and said: "These realms of light,
(If such thy *hope*,) with me thou yet wilt gain;
Behold in me the spring of all thy pain,
Whose morn was darkened by an early night.

My bliss no mortal now can understand;
For thee I wait, and for the hour decreed
Of resurrection to my mortal shrine."

Oh, wherefore cease? Oh, why withdraw her hand?
Her pitying tones my soul had well nigh freed,
And I like her had found a home divine.

---

3. *Heaven's third reign.* The planet Venus is assigned to those spirits who have been virtuous votaries at the shrine of the goddess during life.

4. *Her mien, &c.* Her countenance was freed from the very serious, almost severe expression with which she used sometimes to regard her lover.

6. *If such thy hope.* She told him he would rejoin her if he cast aside earthly wishes, by which formerly he was so governed.

SONNET LXXII.

THE POET ENCOURAGES HIS GRIEF, BY RECALLING HIS HAPPINESS WHEN LAURA WAS PRESENT WITH HIM.

Love! thou, who in my joy was wont to stay,
Upon these friendly shores, which fed our dream,
Discoursing still with me, and that bright stream,
That we our long and mutual debt might weigh:

Shades! caverns! waves! and nature's sweet array!
Still vales! proud hills! plains that with verdure teem;
Ye home and witness of my love's sad theme,
My blighted hope, and fortune's changing sway:

Sweet, tuneful dwellers in the smiling grove!
Gay nymphs! and *ye*, the liquid crystal's bed
Doth feed and welcome to its home of bloom!

Life's chain for me seemed once so brightly wove,
Now dark as death, through whom its sweetness fled:
Thus at his birth each greets his coming doom.

SONNET LXXIII.

THE POET EXPRESSES RENEWED SADNESS, IN CONTEMPLATING NATURE'S UNIVERSAL REJOICING AT THE RETURN OF SPRING.

Bright Zephyrus returns, and with his breath
His fruitful flowery progeny awakes;
The warbling choir with Philomel outbreaks,
And roseate spring shakes off the sleep of death:

Heaven crowns the meadows with a smiling wreath;
Jove, Venus hails, and glad rejoicing makes:
All nature in one strain of love partakes,
All taste anew the boon Heaven did bequeath.

For me, alas! sighs welcome back the spring,
My only offering since that angel's flight,
Who stole my heart's twin key of joy and woe:

The flowering meadows that with music ring,
Soft beauty's charm, arrayed in virtue's light,
On me the wilderness of thought bestow.

---

11. *Twin key.* Petrarch says she bore the keys of his heart away; the one of joy, and the other of sorrow, for in life she made him gay or sad at pleasure. It will be observed that Petrarch makes frequent use of this "*twin.*" It seems to have been a favorite figure with this poet.

SONNET LXXIV.

THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE REMINDS HIM OF HIS UNHAPPY DESTINY. HIS SORROW APPEARS TO HIM MORE ACUTE, FROM ITS HAVING BEEN UNFORSEEN. HE CONCLUDES WITH A MORAL REFLECTION.

The nightingale that oft so sweetly grieves,
Perchance her young, or fondly cherished mate,
Whose notes harmonious breathe at heaven's gate,
While earth responds the woe her bosom heaves :

All night she to my footsteps faithful cleaves,
And thus reminds me of my wretched fate;
My only grief is, that I learned too late
Death o'er a goddess *still* his power achieves.

How light the task to cheat the self-secure !
Whoever had deemed those eyes, (whose dazzling light
The sun had rivaled), would have known decay :

Mid ceaseless tears, to grief my soul inure,
Fate wills it ever should this truth indict,
Each joy is winged, and not on earth will stay.

SONNET LXXV.

THE POET DECLARES THERE IS NOTHING FROM WHICH HE CAN EVER DERIVE PLEASURE.

No starry dream, awaked in cloudless sky;
Nor gallant bark that ploughs the tranquil main:
Nor warlike throng, proud gleaming o'er the plain;
Nor sylvan sport of beasts that nimbly fly;

Not joy's dispatch, for which the heart doth sigh;
Nor love's sweet song, adorned in loftiest strain;
Nor beauty's virtuous note, amid the reign
Of smiling meads and founts heaven doth supply.

Not these, nor aught again can give me joy,
For she who was my eyes' fond mirrored light,
Hath known too well my spirit to entomb:

My life prolonged, my soul doth so annoy,
I pray its close, that she may bless my sight,
Whom had I never seen, were happier doom.

SONNET LXXVI.

HE GRIEVES THAT LAURA HAVING ASCENDED TO HEAVEN, HE IS STILL SEPARATED FROM HER, AFTER ALL THE SORROW HE HAS ENDURED.

Alas! that time hath passed for ever here,
In which my heart rejoiced amid its flame;
She too I wept, and traced so oft her name,
Hath fled, and left me but my pen and tear.

Yet ere that sacred face could disappear,
She planted in my heart her eyes' sweet aim,
That heart *my* rule had quitted, *hers* to claim,
Rejoicing in a home so bright, so dear.

And then by Heaven recalled, she bore it hence
Where now she reigns, adorned with laurel blest,
Sweet triumph she hath won by virtue rare!

Oh! with this mortal vail could I dispense,
With which in vain I strive; what joy to rest
Amid unmourning spirits of the air!

SONNET LXXVII.

HE GRIEVES THAT LAURA SHOULD HAVE DIED WHEN THEY WERE ABOUT TO REAP THE REWARD OF A LONG AND VIRTUOUS AFFECTION, AND HE HAD ARRIVED AT A MATURER AGE.

Life's brightest spring, with all its young perfume,
Were fast exhaling! almost calmly waned
My heart's fierce flame — for I that point had gained
Whence nature proves the escort to *her* tomb.

Insensibly, sweet trust's incipient bloom,
My cherished enemy's pure heart attained,
With virtuous raillery she oft arraigned
My grief — which told its bitterness in gloom.

The time was near when Love's ethereal flame
Wreathes o'er its votaries this sacred power,
To speak the mutual incense of the heart:

But soon death envious of my bliss became,
Nay, of my hope — in its meridian hour,
An armèd foe he met us with his dart.

SONNET LXXVIII.

UPON THE SAME SUBJECT AS THE LAST.

My life's long warfare seemed about to cease,
Peace had my spirit's contest well nigh freed;
But leveling death, who doth to all concede
An equal doom — clipped Time's blest wings of peace;

As zephyrs chase the clouds of gathering fleece,
So did her life from this world's breath recede,
Their visioned light could once my footsteps lead,
But now my all, save thought, she doth release.

Oh! would that *she* her flight awhile had stayed,
For time had stamped on me his warning hand,
And calmer I had told my storied love:

To her in virtue's tone I had conveyed
My heart's long grief — *now*, she doth understand,
And sympathizes with that grief above.

SONNET LXXIX.

HE LAMENTS HAVING PLACED HIS HOPE IN A PERISHABLE BEING, AND SAYS THAT HIS UNQUENCHED LOVE LOR LAURA FINDS CONSOLATION IN CONTEMPLATING HER ETHEREAL SPIRIT.

Oh ! swifter than the hart my life hath fled,
A shadowed dream ; one wingéd glance hath seen
Its only good ; its hours (how few serene !)
The sweet and bitter tide of thought have fed :

Ephemeral world ! in pride and sorrow bred,
Who hope in thee, are blind as I have been ;
I hoped in thee, and thus my heart's loved queen
Hath borne it mid her nerveless, kindred dead.

Her form decayed — its beauty still survives,
For in high Heaven that soul will ever bloom,
With which each day I more enamored grow :

Thus though my locks are blanched, my hope revives
In thinking on her home — her soul's high doom :
Alas ! how changed the shrine she left below !

SONNET LXXX.

UPON HIS RETURN TO VAL' CHIUSA, AFTER LAURA'S DEATH, THE POET LAMENTS HAVING SURVIVED HER, AS IT HAD EVER BEEN HIS HOPE TO PRECEDE HER TO THE TOMB.

I feel my heart's sweet native breeze! I see [light,
Those swelling hills, whence sprang that beauteous
Which long as Heaven ordained, had fed my sight,
But now that air breathes heavily o'er me!

Dull thoughts! and hopes that only wake to flee!
Cold widowed herb! and stream no longer bright!
Her home is dark, where I had dwelt in might,
And prayed yet more, that I in death should be!

I dreamed — to feel her step upon my grave,
To know those eyes in tears, my heart illumed,
Would soothe my long fed grief to rest at last:

To what imperious lord am I the slave?
His living fire my powers then consumed,
And now, each hope his withered embers blast!

---

12. *Imperious lord.* He means Love, who disappointed him during Laura's life, and by her death reduced him to despair.

SONNET LXXXI.

IN REPLY TO THE BISHOP COLONNA, WHO HAD WRITTEN TO CONGRATULATE THE POET ON HIS CORONATION AT ROME, AND DIED BEFORE PETRARCA COULD REPLY TO HIM.

Oh! ne'er shall I behold, with tearless eye,
Or tranquil soul, those characters of thine,
In which affection doth so brighly shine,
And charity's own hand I can descry!

Blest soul! that could this earthly strife defy,
Thy sweets instilling from thy home divine,
Thou wakest in me the tone which once was mine,
To sing my rhymes death's power did long deny.

With these, my brow's young leaves, I fondly dreamed
Another work than this had greeted thee;
What iron planet envied thus our love?

My treasure! veiled ere age had darkly gleamed;
Thou — whom my song records — my heart doth see;
Thou wakest my sigh, and sighing, rest I prove.

---

7. *Thou wakest, &c.* He says, the bishop from his home in heaven has re-awakened in him the power of singing his rhymes, of which Laura's death for some time deprived him.

SONNET LXXXII.

HE CONSOLES HIMSELF FOR THE LOSS HE HAS HIMSELF SUSTAINED, BY REFLECTING UPON LAURA'S BLISS IN HEAVEN.

Death! thou hast done thy worst; thy cruel bow
Hath robbed Love's sovereign rule, of half its might,
Hath crushed the flower, and quenched soft beauty's light,
Which now on earth's dark home, their charms bestow.

From life thou hast withdrawn its brightest glow,
Its sweetest grace, and honor's proud delight;
But fadeless virtue, Death! thou canst not smite,
Man's bones alone to thee, allegiance owe!

Heaven claims its subject soul — new glory sheds,
As though rejoicing in a wakened sun,
To welcome *her*, bright pledge of good on earth:

Oh spirit! that the skies an angel treads,
In *pity* let thy triumph be begun
For him, who too was vanquished by thy worth.

SONNET LXXXIII.

STILL INCONSOLABLE FOR THE LOSS OF LAURA, HIS ONLY HOPE IS DEATH: HE PROMISES BY HIS SONG TO RENDER HER IMMORTAL, EVEN UPON EARTH.

Death! who alone a breathing world can still,
Hath robbed me of my laurel's sweet perfume —
My cooling breeze, — my flower's gentle bloom, —
Which shed repose and light upon my ill.

As Dian, Phœbus vails in shadows chill,
So hath my light exalted, set in gloom;
I death invoke for aid against his tomb,
With such dark thoughts doth Love my bosom fill.

Oh, beauteous lady! thou hast briefly slept,
To wake in bliss, where Man's elected soul
Doth contemplate its great creator — God!

And should the breath of fame my rhymes accept,
The gifted here, with them, shall thee enroll,
Thy name shall ever bloom on earth's fair sod.

---

2. *Laurel.* Laura, again.
7. *I death invoke.* He invokes Death to release him from the pain he (Death) has inflicted upon him, by robbing him of Laura.
9. *Briefly slept.* This and the following lines are most sublime. He compares human life to a sleep, waking to life eternal.
13. *The gifted here.* Laura's name shall be classed among the most exalted and the most noble in intellect.

SONNET LXXXIV.

HE RECALLS MANY TOKENS IN HIS LAST VISIT TO LAURA, BY WHICH HE MIGHT HAVE FORSEEN HER DEATH; AND HE MOURNS THAT HE WAS NOT THEN AWARE OF THEM.

My last bright day had shed its opening beam,
(Alas! but few doth life on me bestow)
My heart within, sank like dissolving snow,
Sad presage of my pleasure's closing gleam.

With nerveless frame, and mind as his doth seem
Whose fevered veins with plague incipient glow,
I prostrate felt — yet *then* I did not know
That I must wake from joy's unfinished dream.

Those beauteous eyes from Heaven exulting shine
With that blest light, whence issues health and life;
Yet here, (ere mine they left in beggared joy)

They seemed to say, with glance so new, benign,
"Oh peaceful dwell! we part from earthly strife,
To meet, my friend, in bliss, without alloy!"

---

3. *Dissolving snow.* When he quitted her, he could scarcely restrain his tears.

SONNET LXXXV.

UPON THE SAME SUBJECT AS THE LAST.

Oh day! oh hour! moment's short review!
Ye stars! together leagued to strip my heart!
Oh, faithful glance! what wouldst thou *then* impart,
When last to thee and joy I bade adieu?

But now my loss I know; I feel anew [dart
How vain Man's dream; I thought not Time's winged
Stole *all* my joy, but with *her presence*, *part*—
Alas! how many hopes the winds subdue.

Heaven had pronounced that we no more should meet,
The light my heart had fed should he bereaved,
Her cheek resigned, and pale, had told my doom!

But o'er my sight was cast a visioned cheat,
I saw not *that*, which yet my eyes received,
And this, that I might sink in sudden gloom.

---

4. *Bade adieu.* When he quitted Laura for the last time.

7. *Stole all my joy.* In losing Laura's presence, he thought he lost *part* of his happiness only—not the whole: of which death afterward deprived him.

SONNET LXXXVI.

HE DIRECTS HIS RHYMES TO SEEK LAURA'S TOMB, TO TELL HER HE FEELS DEATH IS APPROACHING, PRAYING HER TO COME TO HIM.

Go, my sad rhymes; go seek that chilling stone,
Which hides my treasure in its marble breast,
Ye, she will answer from her blessed rest,
Though here, her dwelling be obscure and lone.

Oh! tell her, I of life am weary grown,
No more can with this frightful sea contest:
While I with form, her scattered leaves invest,
Each day a nearer step to her, I own.

In life she waked my strain, and still in death
(In death! ah no! she lives immortal now!)
I sing, that all may know and love her well:

Oh! may she deign to watch my parting breath,
To guide my soul when soon in death I bow,
That I in heaven with her as pure may dwell.

---

3. *Ye, she will answer.* A strange conceit, to imagine that Laura (though he supposes her a beautified spirit) could answer the prayer of a mortal.

7. *Scattered leaves.* Petrarch means Laura's praises, scattered throughout his sonnets; and which sonnets he is engaged in arranging in proper order, before his death.

SONNET LXXXVII.

HE PRAYS THAT, IN REWARD FOR HIS LONG AND VIRTUOUS ATTACHMENT, LAURA WILL VISIT HIM IN DEATH.

If virtuous love doth merit recompense —
If pity still maintain its wonted sway —
I *that* reward shall win, for bright as day
To earth and Laura breathes my faith's incense.

She feared me once — now heavenly confidence
Reveals my heart's first hope's unchanging stay;
A word, a look, could this alone convey,
My heart she reads *now*, stripped of earth's defense.

And thus I hope, she for my heavy sighs
To heaven complains, to *me* she pity shows
By sympathetic visits in my dream:

And when this mortal temple breathless lies,
Oh! may she greet my soul, enclosed by those
Whom Heaven and Virtue love — our friends supreme.

---

8. *My heart, &c.* Petrarch seems to infer, that on earth there is always a comparative disguise, as mortals can only interpret each other's sentiments through a medium — language, or the eyes; but in heaven, spirits are permitted to read the hearts of those in whom they have trusted, and who are still on earth.

SONNET LXXXVIII.

HIS IMAGINATION IS SO DISTORTED BY DWELLING ETERNALLY ON LAURA'S MEMORY, THAT HE FANCIES HE BEHOLDS HER STILL IN LIFE. HE RECALLS HIS MIND FROM THE DELUSION, BY REMINDING IT OF THE YEAR AND DAY ON WHICH SHE DIED.

My mind recals her; nay, her home is there,
Nor Lethean draught can banish thence her form,
I see that star's pure ray, her spirit warm,
Whose grace and spring-time beauty, she doth wear.

As thus my vision paints her charms so rare,
That none to such perfection may conform;
I cry: "'Tis she! death doth to life transform!
And then to hear *that* voice, I wake my prayer."

She now replies, and now doth mute appear,
Like one whose tottering mind regains its power;
I speak my heart: "Thou must this cheat resign;

The thirteen hundred, eight and fortieth year,
The sixth of April's suns, his first bright hour,
Thou knowest that soul celestial fled, its shrine!"

---

4. *Whose grace, &c.* He beholds her adorned with the beauty and grace of Venus.

SONNET LXXXIX.

HE SAYS, THAT IN LAURA ALONE NATURE DISPLAYED THE PERFECTION OF LOVELINESS; AND HE CONSOLES HIMSELF FOR HER BEING WITHDRAWN FROM HIS SIGHT, IN THE REFLECTION THAT, LIKE A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE, SHE HAD BEEN ONLY CONCEDED AWHILE TO HIS CONTEMPLATION.

That gift we beauty name, (whose essence flies
Ere scarce inhaled, as shades before the wind)
Ne'er perfect dwelt within one frame enshrined
Till now — it waked, *my* spirit to chastise.

To beggar others, to create one prize,
Had nature's justice never yet inclined;
She now to *one* her richest gifts resigned;
Beauties forgive! and ye who dream its guise!

Not any age had seen a thing so fair,
Nor e'er its like will see; it dwelt so vailed,
This sinful world scarce knew its modest light:

But soon it fled — and now my soul must wear
A hue more holy, ere it is exhaled,
To harmonize with her celestial light.

SONNET XC.

HE REFLECTS UPON THE BREVITY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE, AND REPROVES HIMSELF FOR DELAYING TO OFFER UP TO HEAVEN ALONE, THE LOVE HE STILL BEARS TO LAURA'S MEMORY.

Oh time ! oh circling heavens ! in your flight
We mortals ye deceive — so poor and blind ;
Oh days ! more fleeting than the shaft or wind,
Experience brings your treachery to my sight !

But mine the error — ye yourselves are right ;
Your flight fulfils but *that* your wings designed :
My eyes were nature's gift, yet ne'er could find
But one blest light — and hence their present blight.

It now is time (perchance the hour is past)
That they a safer dwelling should select,
And thus repose, might soothe my grief acute :

Love's yoke the spirit may not from it cast,
(With oh what pain !) it may its ill eject ;
But virtue is attained but by pursuit !

---

10. *A safer dwelling.* He means, that from Heaven he should find rest for all his heavy sorrow.

SONNET XCI.

HE SAYS, THAT ALTHOUGH HE INDIVIDUALLY MOURNS FOR LAURA, THE WORLD HAS SUSTAINED A GENERAL LOSS IN HER DEATH.

Death! thou hast left the world without its sun,
Now cold and dark — and Love disarmed and blind;
Beauty lies prostrate — Grace no charm can find —
Disconsolate I dwell, by grief undone.

Kindness is banished — virtue's race is run;
I grieve alone; yet others had repined,
For virtue's germ is to decay consigned;
That blossom quenched, *who* next its bloom had won?

Earth, sea, and air — the world — should equal mourn,
Which, in her absence, seems a flowerless mead,
A ring from which hath dropped its gem of light:

It knew her not, till she from us was torn;
I knew her *then* — *now* on her memory feed;
Heaven too, doth, in her presence, shine more bright.

---

8. *Who next, &c.* Petrarch asks, who will succeed Laura in uniting such beauty and virtue in one form?

SONNET XCII.

HE RELATES THE CONSOLATION HE HAS RECEIVED FROM LAURA HAVING APPEARED TO HIM IN A DREAM.

With grief and tears, (my soul's proud sovereign's food)
I ever nourish still my aching heart;
I feel my blanching cheek, and oft I start
As on Love's sharp engraven wound I brood,

But she, who e'er on earth unrivalled stood,
Flits o'er my couch, when prostrate by his dart
I lie — and there her presence doth impart,
While scarce my eyes dare meet their visioned good.

With that fair hand, in life I so desired,
She stays my eyes' sad tide; her voice's tone
Awakes the balm, *earth*, ne'er to man can give:

And thus she speaks: "Oh! vain hath wisdom fired
The hopeless mourner's breast; no more bemoan,
I am not dead — would *thou* like *me* couldst live!"

---

12. *Oh vain, &c.* Laura asks of what value is reason to the mourner who refuses to be comforted.

SONNET XCIII.

HE APOLOGIZES FOR HAVING MURMURED AGAINST LAURA, IN A FORMER SONNET, FOR THE MISERY SHE HAD CAUSED HIM: HE ACCUSES EXCESSIVE GRIEF AS THE CAUSE, WHICH URGED HIM TO SUCH UNREASONABLE LAMENTATIONS.

My love and grief compelled me to proclaim
My heart's lament, and urged me to convey
That were it true, of *her* I should not say,
Who woke alike my song, and bosom's flame:

For I should comfort find, 'mid this world's shame,
To mark her soul's beatified array,
To think that *He* who *here* had owned its sway,
Doth now within *His* home its presence claim.

And true I comfort find — myself resigned,
I would not woo her back to earthly gloom ;
Oh ! rather let me die, or live still lone !

My mental eye, that holds her there enshrined,
Now paints her winged, bright with celestial bloom,
Prostrate beneath our mutual Heaven's throne.

---

8. *His home.* Piety was one of Laura's most distinguished characteristics.

SONNET XCIV.

THE POET SAYS THAT WHEN LAURA FLED TO HEAVEN THE ANGELS GATHERED ROUND HER IN ADMIRATION: HE DETERMINES TO PURSUE HER PATH OF VIRTUE.

When Laura fled to her celestial skies,
The high-elected angels — spirits blest —
Those heavenly citizens — around her prest,
With reverend glances, yet, of strange surprise :

" What light is this, and in so new a guise ?
No mortal ever thus in beauty drest
Hath sought admittance here, as heaven's guest
From earth's dark home !" (each to the other cries.)

But *she*, exulting in her new abode,
Her essence mingles with the souls most pure,
While still from time to time she looks behind :

She marks expectant that I track her road,
To haste my flight I hear her me adjure,
And thus in heaven my every wish I find !

SONNET XCV.

HE CONJURES LAURA BY THE LOVE AND PURE FAITH HE EVER BORE HER, TO OBTAIN FOR HIM A SPEEDY TERMINATION TO HIS EXISTENCE, AND AN ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN.

Lady! whose gentle virtues have obtained
For thee a dwelling with thy Maker blest,
To sit enthroned above, in angel's vest,
(Whose luster gold nor purple had attained :)

Ah thou! who here the most exalted reigned,
Now through the eyes of Him who knows each breast,
That heart's pure faith and love thou canst attest,
Which both my pen and tears alike sustained.

Thou knowest, too, my heart was thine on earth,
As now it is in heaven; no hope was there,
But to avow thine eyes — its only shrine;

Thus to reward the strife, which owes its birth
To thee, who won my each affectioned care,
Pray Heaven to waft me to *his* home and *thine!*

SONNET XCVI.

HE EXPRESSES HIS DESIRE FOR DEATH. HAVING HIS HOPE IN HIS REDEEMER, AND ENCOURAGED BY THE EXAMPLE OF LAURA, HE FEARS NOT THAT EVENT WHICH IS OFTEN ANTICIPATED WITH SO MUCH DREAD.

Death cannot make that beauteous face less fair,
But that sweet face may lend to death a grace;
My spirit's guide! from her, each good I trace,
Who learns to die, may seek his lesson there.

That holy one! who not his blood would spare,
But did the dark Tartarean bolts unbrace:
He, too, doth from my soul death's terrors chase:
Then welcome, death! thy impress I would wear.

And linger not! 'tis time that I had fled;
Alas! my stay hath little here availed,
Since she, my Laura blest, resigned her breath:

Life's spring in me, hath since that hour lain dead,
In her I lived, my life in hers exhaled,
The hour she died, I felt within me, death!

---

12. *Life's spring.* Petrarch here beautifully expresses the heart's void that has lost for ever its one cherished object. The soul may yet breathe to heaven, and find hope and consolation from its aspirations; but the heart, which partakes of earth, lies dead to every future impulse of happiness.

SONNET XCVII.

HE REFLECTS UPON THE IMPERFECTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE, AND CONSOLES HIMSELF THAT HE MUST SOON PASS AWAY FROM ITS VANITIES.

The mirrored friend — my changing form hath read,
My every power's incipient decay —
My wearied soul — alike, in warning say
" Thyself no more deceive, thy youth hath fled."

'Tis ever best to be by nature led,
We strive with *her*, and death makes us *his* prey ;
At that dread thought, like flames the waters stay,
The dream is gone my life hath sadly fed.

I wake to feel how soon existence flies,
Once known, 'tis gone, and never to return.
Still vibrates in my heart the thrilling tone

Of her, who now her beauteous shrine defies :
But she, who here to rival, none could learn,
Hath robbed her sex, and with its fame hath flown.

SONNET XCVIII.

HE DESIRES TO JOIN LAURA IN HEAVEN, AND WITH HER, TO CONTEMPLATE THE GLORIES OF THEIR CREATOR, AND PRAYS THAT HE MAY NOT TARRY LONG ON EARTH.

So oft to Heaven I fly, on thought's bright wing,
That fancy paints me dwelling with the blest,
Who *there*, their only treasure have possest,
And joyed their mortal vail on earth to fling.

She speaks, (who wakes my bosom's thrilling string
And doth my cheek of life's best hue divest)
" My friend ! thy love is now my honored guest,
For age, doth wisdom to thy spirit bring."

I pray her guidance to her sovereign's throne,
And there I humbly plead, that I may dwell,
In contemplating Him, and that bright soul :

But Heaven replies : "My will for thee is known ;
Though long to thee, soon will ring thy knell,
Still, twenty summers yet, may o'er thee roll."

SONNET XCIX.

HE REPROVES HIMSELF FOR ONE-AND-TWENTY YEARS OF MISSPENT TIME, AND PRAYS FOR SUCCOUR FROM ABOVE THAT HE MAY CONSECRATE HIS THOUGHTS TO HEAVEN.

Love held me one-and-twenty years enchained,
His flame was joy — for hope, was in my grief;
For ten more years I wept without relief,
When Laura with my heart, to Heaven attained.

Now weary grown, my life I had arraigned,
That in its error, checked (to my belief)
Blest virtue's seeds — now, in my yellow leaf,
I grieve the misspent years, existence stained.

Alas! it might have sought a brighter goal,
In flying troublous thoughts, and winning peace;
Oh Father! I repentant seek thy throne:

Thou, in this temple hath enshrined my soul,
Oh bless me yet, and grant its safe release!
Unjustified — my sin I humbly own.

SONNET C.

HE CONFESSES WITH REPENTANCE HIS ERROR, AND PRAYS FOR THE DIVINE ASSISTANCE TO TEACH HIM HOW TO LIVE, AND HOW TO DIE.

I mourn the wasted life I had begun
In loving *that*, was doomed alas ! to die ;
While vain the wings Heaven gave, that I might fly,
And soaring — leave the track I nobly won.

Oh Thou ! invisible immortal one !
Who seest the grief, my spirit should defy ;
Oh ! that thy grace, my weakness, may supply,
Support the soul, that knows not ill to shun !

Though war and tempest mark my earthly course,
Oh ! let a peaceful haven greet its close —
Though vain my life — a Christian let me die !

Thou knowst thou art alone, my soul's resource,
Oh guard the life, thy mercy yet bestows,
And when in death, thine aid do not deny !

For beauty and sublimity of expression this concluding prayer is allowed to stand unrivalled in any language.

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